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BOOKS AND MEN

BY

AGNES REPPLIER, LITT. D.

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BOOKS AND MEN.

CHILDREN, PAST AND PRESENT.

As a result of the modern tendency to desert the broad beaten roads of history for the bridle-paths of biography and memoir, we find a great many side lights thrown upon matters that the historian was wont to treat as altogether beneath his consideration. It is by their help that we study the minute changes of social life that little by little alter the whole aspect of a people, and it is by their help that we look straight into the ordinary every-day workings of the past, and measure the space between its existence and our own. When we read, for instance, of Lady Cathcart being kept a close prisoner by her husband for over twenty years, we look with some complacency on the roving wives of the nineteenth century. When we reflect on the dismal fate of Uriel Freudenberger, condemned by the Canton of Uri to be

burnt alive in 1760, for rashly proclaiming his disbelief in the legend of William Tell's apple, we realize the inconveniences attendant on a too early development of the critical faculty. We listen entranced while the learned pastor Dr. Johann Geiler von Keyersperg gravely enlightens his congregation as to the nature and properties of were-wolves; and we turn aside to see the half-starved boys at Westminster boiling their own batter-pudding in a stocking foot, or to hear the little John Wesley crying softly when he is whipped, not being permitted even then the luxury of a hearty bellow.

Perhaps the last incident will strike us as the most pathetic of all, this being essentially the children's age. Women, workmen, and skeptics all have reason enough to be grateful they were not born a few generations earlier; but the children of to-day are favored beyond their knowledge, and certainly far beyond their deserts. Compare the modern schoolboy with any of his ill-fated predecessors, from the days of Spartan discipline down to our grandfathers' time. Turn from the free-and-easy school-girl of the period to the

miseries of Mrs. Sherwood's youth, with its steel collars, its backboards, its submissive silence and rigorous decorum. Think of the turbulent and uproarious nurseries we all know, and then go back in spirit to that severe and occult shrine where Mrs. Wesley ruled over her infant brood with a code of disciplinary laws as awful and inviolable as those of the Medes and Persians. Of their supreme efficacy she plainly felt no doubts, for she has left them carefully written down for the benefit of succeeding generations, though we fear that few mothers of to-day would be tempted by their stringent austerity. They are to modern nursery rules what the Blue Laws of Connecticut are to our more languid legislation. Each child was expected and required to commemorate its fifth birthday by learning the entire alphabet by heart. To insure this all-important matter, the whole house was impressively set in order the day before; every one's task was assigned to him; and Mrs. Wesley, issuing strict commands that no one should penetrate into the sanctuary while the solemn ordeal was in process, shut herself up for six hours with the unhappy morsel of a

child, and unflinchingly drove the letters into its bewildered brain. On two occasions only was she unsuccessful. "Molly and Nancy," we are told, failed to learn in the given time, and their mother comforts herself for their tardiness by reflecting on the still greater incapacity of other people's bairns.

"When the will of a child is totally subdued, and it is brought to revere and stand in awe of its parents," then, and then only, their rigid judge considers that some little inadvertences and follies may be safely passed over. Nor would she permit one of them to "be chid or beaten twice for the same fault," — a stately assumption of justice that speaks volumes for the iron-bound code by which they were brought into subjection. Most children nowadays are sufficiently amazed if a tardy vengeance overtake them once, and a second penalty for the same offense is something we should hardly deem it necessary to proscribe. Yet nothing is more evident than that Mrs. Wesley was neither a cruel nor an unloving mother. It is plain that she labored hard for her little flock, and had their welfare and happiness greatly at heart. In after years they

with one accord honored and revered her memory. Only it is not altogether surprising that her husband, whose ministerial functions she occasionally usurped, should have thought his wife at times almost too able a ruler, or that her more famous son should stand forth as the great champion of human depravity. He too, some forty years later, promulgated a system of education as unrelaxing in its methods as that of his own childhood. In his model school he forbade all association with outside boys, and would receive no child unless its parents promised not to take it away for even a single day, until removed for good. Yet after shutting up the lads in this hot-bed of propriety, and carefully guarding them from every breath of evil, he ended by expelling part as incorrigible, and ruefully admitting that the remainder were very "uncommonly wicked."

The principle of solitary training for a child, in order to shield it effectually from all outside influences, found other and vastly different advocates. It is the key-note of Mr. and Miss Edgeworth's Practical Education, a book which must have driven over-careful and scrupulous mothers to the verge of desperation.

In it they are solemnly counseled never to permit their children to walk or talk with servants, never to let them have a nursery or a school-room, never to leave them alone either with each other or with strangers, and never to allow them to read any book of which every sentence has not been previously examined. In the matter of books, it is indeed almost impossible to satisfy such searching critics. Even Mrs. Barbauld's highly correct and righteous little volumes, which Lamb has anathematized as the "blights and blasts of all that is human," are not quite harmless in their eyes. Evil lurks behind the phrase "Charles wants his dinner," which would seem to imply that Charles must have whatever he desires; while to say flippantly, "The sun has gone to bed," is to incur the awful odium of telling a child a deliberate untruth.

In Miss Edgeworth's own stories the didactic purpose is only veiled by the sprightliness of the narrative and the air of amusing reality she never fails to impart. Who that has ever read them can forget Harry and Lucy making up their own little beds in the morning, and knocking down the unbaked bricks to prove

that they were soft; or Rosamond choosing between the famous purple jar and a pair of new boots; or Laura forever drawing the furniture in perspective? In all these little people say and do there is conveyed to the young reader a distinct moral lesson, which we are by no means inclined to reject, when we turn to the other writers of the time and see how much worse off we are. Day, in Sandford and Merton, holds up for our edification the dreariest and most insufferable of pedagogues, and advocates a mode of life wholly at variance with the instincts and habits of his age. Miss Sewell, in her Principles of Education, sternly warns young girls against the sin of chattering with each other, and forbids mothers' playing with their children as a piece of frivolity which cannot fail to weaken the dignity of their position.

To a great many parents, both in England and in France, such advice would have been unnecessary. Who, for instance, can imagine Lady Balcarras, with whom it was a word and a blow in quick succession, stooping to any such weakness; or that august mother of Harriet Martineau, against whom her daughter

has recorded all the slights and severities of her youth? Not that we think Miss Martineau to have been much worse off than other children of her day; but as she has chosen with signal ill-taste to revenge herself upon her family in her autobiography, we have at least a better opportunity of knowing all about it. "To one person," she writes, "I was indeed habitually untruthful, from fear. To my mother I would in my childhood assert or deny anything that would bring me through most easily," — a confession which, to say the least, reflects as little to her own credit as to her parent's. Had Mrs. Martineau been as stern an upholder of the truth as was Mrs. Wesley, her daughter would have ventured upon very few fabrications in her presence. When she tells us gravely how often she meditated suicide in these early days, we are fain to smile at hearing a fancy so common among morbid and imaginative children narrated soberly in middle life, as though it were a unique and horrible experience. No one endowed by nature with so copious a fund of self-sympathy could ever have stood in need of much pity from the outside world.

But for real and uncompromising severity towards children we must turn to France, where for years the traditions of decorum and discipline were handed down in noble families, and generations of boys and girls suffered grievously therefrom. Trifling faults were magnified into grave delinquencies, and relentlessly punished as such. We sometimes wonder whether the youthful Bertrand du Guesclin were really the wicked little savage that the old chroniclers delight in painting, or whether his rude truculence was not very much like that of naughty and neglected boys the world over. There is, after all, a pathetic significance in those lines of Cuvelier's which describe in barbarous French the lad's remarkable and unprepossessing ugliness: —

> "Il n'ot si lait de Resnes à Disnant,
> Camus estoit et noirs, malostru et massant.
> Li père et la mère si le héoiant tant,
> Que souvent en leurs cuers aloient desirant
> Que fust mors, ou noiey en une eaue corant."

Perhaps, if he had been less flat-nosed and swarthy, his better qualities might have shone forth more clearly in early life, and it would not have needed the predictions of a magician

or the keen-eyed sympathy of a nun to evolve the future Constable of France out of such apparently hopeless material. At any rate, tradition generally representing him either as languishing in the castle dungeon, or exiled to the society of the domestics, it is plain he bore but slight resemblance to the cherished *enfant terrible* who is his legitimate successor to-day.

Coming down to more modern times, we are met by such monuments of stately severity as Madame Quinet and the Marquise de Montmirail, mother of that fair saint Madame de Rochefoucauld, the trials of whose later years were ushered in by a childhood of unremitting harshness and restraint. The marquise was incapable of any faltering or weakness where discipline was concerned. If carrots were repulsive to her little daughter's stomach, then a day spent in seclusion, with a plate of the obnoxious vegetable before her, was the surest method of proving that carrots were nevertheless to be eaten. When Augustine and her sister kissed their mother's hand each morning, and prepared to con their tasks in her awful presence, they well knew that not the smallest dereliction would be passed over by that

inexorable judge. Nor might they aspire, like Harriet Martineau, to shield themselves behind the barrier of a lie. When from Augustine's little lips came faltering some childish evasion, the ten-year-old sinner was hurried as an outcast from her home, and sent to expiate her crime with six months' merciful seclusion in a convent. "You have told me a falsehood, mademoiselle," said the marquise, with frigid accuracy; "and you must prepare to leave my house upon the spot."

Faults of breeding were quite as offensive to this *grande dame* as faults of temper. The fear of her pitiless glance filled her daughters with timidity, and bred in them a *mauvaise honte*, which in its turn aroused her deadliest ire. Only a week before her wedding-day Madame de Rochefoucauld was sent ignominiously to dine at a side table, as a penance for the awkwardness of her curtsy; while even her fast-growing beauty became but a fresh source of misfortune. The dressing of her magnificent hair occupied two long hours every day, and she retained all her life a most distinct and painful recollection of her sufferings at the hands of her *coiffeuse*.

To turn from the Marquis de Montmirail to Madame Quinet is to see the picture intensified. More beautiful, more stately, more unswerving still, her faith in discipline was unbounded, and her practice in no wise inconsistent with her belief. It was actually one of the institutions of her married life that a *garde de ville* should pay a domiciliary visit twice a week to chastise the three children. If by chance they had not been naughty, then the punishment might be referred to the acount of future transgressions, — an arrangement which, while it insured justice to the culprits, can hardly have afforded them much encouragement to amend. Her son Jerome, who ran away when a mere boy to enroll with the volunteers of '92, reproduced in later years, for the benefit of his own household, many of his mother's most striking characteristics. He was the father of Edgar Quinet, the poet, a child whose precocious abilities seem never to have awakened within him either parental affection or parental pride. Silent, austere, repellent, he offered no caresses, and was obeyed with timid submission. "The gaze of his large blue eyes," says Dowden, "imposed restraint with silent

authority. His mockery, the play of an intellect unsympathetic by resolve and upon principle, was freezing to a child; and the most distinct consciousness which his presence produced upon the boy was the assurance that he, Edgar, was infallibly about to do something which would cause displeasure." That this was a common attitude with parents in the old *régime* may be inferred from Châteaubriand's statement that he and his sister, transformed into statues by their father's presence, recovered their life only when he left the room; and by the assertion of Mirabeau that even while at school, two hundred leagues away from *his* father, "the mere thought of him made me dread every youthful amusement which could be followed by the slightest unfavorable result."

Yet at the present day we are assured by Mr. Marshall that in France "the art of spoiling has reached a development which is unknown elsewhere, and maternal affection not infrequently descends to folly and imbecility." But then the clever critic of French Home Life had never visited America when he wrote those lines, although some of the stories he tells

would do credit to any household in our land. There is one quite delightful account of a young married couple, who, being invited to a dinner party of twenty people, failed to make their appearance until ten o'clock, when they explained urbanely that their three-year-old daughter would not permit them to depart. Moreover, being a child of great character and discrimination, she had insisted on their undressing and going to bed; to which reasonable request they had rendered a prompt compliance, rather than see her cry. "It would have been monstrous," said the fond mother, "to cause her pain simply for our pleasure; so I begged Henri to cease his efforts to persuade her, and we took off our clothes and went to bed. As soon as she was asleep we got up again, redressed, and here we are with a thousand apologies for being so late."

This sounds half incredible; but there is a touch of nature in the mother's happy indifference to the comfort of her friends, as compared with the whims of her offspring, that closely appeals to certain past experiences of our own. It is all very well for an Englishman to stare aghast at such a reversal of the

laws of nature; we Americans, who have suffered and held our peace, can afford to smile with some complacency at the thought of another great nation bending its head beneath the iron yoke.

To return, however, to the days when children were the ruled, and not the rulers, we find ourselves face to face with the great question of education. How smooth and easy are the paths of learning made now for the little feet that tread them! How rough and steep they were in bygone times, watered with many tears, and not without a line of victims, whose weak strength failed them in the upward struggle! We cannot go back to any period when school life was not fraught with miseries. Classic writers paint in grim colors the harshness of the pedagogues who ruled in Greece and Rome. Mediæval authors tell us more than enough of the passionless severity that swayed the monastic schools, — a severity which seems to have been the result of an hereditary tradition rather than of individual caprice, and which seldom interfered with the mutual affection that existed between master and scholar. When St. Anselm, the future

disciple of Lanfranc, and his successor in the See of Canterbury, begged as a child of four to be sent to school, his mother, Ermenberg, — the granddaughter of a king, and the kinswoman of every crowned prince in Christendom, — resisted his entreaties as long as she dared, knowing too well the sufferings in store for him. A few years later she was forced to yield, and these same sufferings very nearly cost her son his life.

The boy was both studious and docile, and his teacher, fully recognizing his precocious talents, determined to force them to the utmost. In order that so active a mind should not for a moment be permitted to relax its tension, he kept the little scholar a ceaseless prisoner at his desk. Rest and recreation were alike denied him, while the utmost rigors of a discipline, of which we can form no adequate conception, wrung from the child's overworked brain an unflinching attention to his tasks. As a result of this cruel folly, "the brightest star of the eleventh century had been well-nigh quenched in its rising."[1] Mind and body alike yielded beneath the strain; and

[1] *Life of St. Anselm, Bishop of Canterbury.* By Martin Rule.

Anselm, a broken-down little wreck, was returned to his mother's hands, to be slowly nursed back to health and reason. "Ah, me! I have lost my child!" sighed Ermenberg, when she found that not all that he had suffered could shake the boy's determination to return; and the mother of Guibert de Nogent must have echoed the sentiment when her little son, his back purple with stripes, looked her in the face, and answered steadily to her lamentations, "If I die of my whippings, I still mean to be whipped."

The step from the monastic schools to Eton and Westminster is a long one, but the gain not so apparent at first sight as might be supposed. It is hard for the luxurious Etonian of to-day to realize that for many years his predecessors suffered enough from cold, hunger, and barbarous ill-treatment to make life a burden on their hands. The system, while it hardened some into the desired manliness, must have killed many whose feebler constitutions could ill support its rigor. Even as late as 1834, we are told by one who had ample opportunity to study the subject carefully that "the inmates of a workhouse or a jail were

better fed and lodged than were the scholars of Eton. Boys whose parents could not pay for a private room underwent privations that might have broken down a cabin-boy, and would be thought inhuman if inflicted on a galley-slave." Nor is this sentiment as exaggerated as it sounds. To get up at five on freezing winter mornings; to sweep their own floors and make their own beds; to go two by two to the "children's pump" for a scanty wash; to eat no mouthful of food until nine o'clock; to live on an endless round of mutton, potatoes, and beer, none of them too plentiful or too good; to sleep in a dismal cell without chair or table; to improvise a candlestick out of paper; to be starved, frozen, and flogged, — such was the daily life of the scions of England's noblest families, of lads tenderly nurtured and sent from princely homes to win their Greek and Latin at this fearful cost.

Moreover, the picture of one public school is in all essential particulars the picture of the rest. The miseries might vary somewhat, but their bulk remained the same. At Westminster the younger boys, hard pushed by hunger, gladly received the broken victuals left from

the table of the senior election, and tried to supplement their scanty fare with strange and mysterious concoctions, whose unsavory details have been handed down among the melancholy traditions of the past.

In 1847 a young brother of Lord Mansfield being very ill at school, his mother came to visit him. There was but one chair in the room, upon which the poor invalid was reclining; but his companion, seeing the dilemma, immediately arose, and with true boyish politeness offered Lady Mansfield the coal-scuttle, on which he himself had been sitting. At Winchester, Sydney Smith suffered "many years of misery and starvation," while his younger brother, Courtenay, twice ran away, in the vain effort to escape his wretchedness. "There was never enough provided of even the coarsest food for the whole school," writes Lady Holland; "and the little boys were of course left to fare as well as they could. Even in his old age my father used to shudder at the recollections of Winchester, and I have heard him speak with horror of the misery of the years he spent there. The whole system, he affirmed, was one of abuse, neglect, and vice."

In the matter of discipline there was no shadow of choice anywhere. Capricious cruelty ruled under every scholastic roof. On the one side, we encounter Dean Colet, of St. Paul's, whom Erasmus reported as "delighting in children in a Christian spirit;" which meant that he never wearied of seeing them suffer, believing that the more they endured as boys, the more worthy they would grow in manhood. On the other, we are confronted by the still more awful ghost of Dr. Keate, who could and did flog eighty boys in succession without a pause; and who, being given the confirmation list by mistake for the punishment list, insisted on flogging every one of the catechumens, as a good preparation for receiving the sacrament. Sir Francis Doyle, almost the only apologist who has so far ventured to appear in behalf of this fiery little despot, once remarked to Lord Blachford that Keate did not much mind a boy's lying to him. "What he hated was a monotony of excuses." "Mind your lying to him!" retorted Lord Blachford, with a keen recollection of his own juvenile experiences; 'why he exacted it as a token of respect."

If, sick of the brutality of the schools, we seek those rare cases in which a home education was substituted, we are generally rewarded by finding the comforts greater and the cramming worse. It is simply impossible for a pedagogue to try and wring from a hundred brains the excess of work which may, under clever treatment, be extracted from one; and so the Eton boys, with all their manifold miseries, were at least spared the peculiar experiments which were too often tried upon solitary scholars. Nowadays anxious parents and guardians seem to labor under an ill-founded apprehension that their children are going to hurt themselves by over-application to their books, and we hear a great deal about the expedience of restraining this inordinate zeal. But a few generations back such comfortable theories had yet to be evolved, and the plain duty of a teacher was to goad the student on to every effort in his power.

Perhaps the two most striking instances of home training that have been given to the world are those of John Stuart Mill and Giacomo Leopardi; the principal difference being that, while the English boy was crammed

scientifically by his father, the Italian poet was permitted to relentlessly cram himself. In both cases we see the same melancholy, blighted childhood; the same cold indifference to the mother, as to one who had no part or parcel in their lives; the same joyless routine of labor; the same unboyish gravity and precocious intelligence. Mill studied Greek at three, Latin at eight, the Organon at eleven, and Adam Smith at thirteen. Leopardi at ten was well acquainted with most Latin authors, and undertook alone and unaided the study of Greek, perfecting himself in that language before he was fourteen. Mill's sole recreation was to walk with his father, narrating to him the substance of his last day's reading. Leopardi, being forbidden to go about Recanati without his tutor, acquiesced with pathetic resignation, and ceased to wander outside the garden gates. Mill had all boyish enthusiasm and healthy partisanship crushed out of him by his father's pitiless logic. Leopardi's love for his country burned like a smothered flame, and added one more to the pangs that eat out his soul in silence. His was truly a wonderful intellect; and whereas the English

lad was merely forced by training into a precocity foreign to his nature, and which, according to Mr. Bain, failed to produce any great show of juvenile scholarship, the Italian boy fed on books with a resistless and craving appetite, his mind growing warped and morbid as his enfeebled body sank more and more under the unwholesome strain. In the long lists of despotically reared children there is no sadder sight than this undisciplined, eager, impetuous soul, burdened alike with physical and moral weakness, meeting tyrannical authority with a show of insincere submission, and laying up in his lonely infancy the seeds of a sorrow which was to find expression in the key-note of his work, Life is Only Fit to be Despised.

Between the severe mental training of boys and the education thought fit and proper for girls, there was throughout the eighteenth century a broad and purposeless chasm. Before that time, and after it, too, the majority of women were happily ignorant of many subjects which every school-girl of to-day aspires to handle; but during the reigns of Queen Anne and the first three Georges, this igno-

rance was considered an essential charm of their sex, and was displayed with a pretty ostentation that sufficiently proves its value. Such striking exceptions as Madame de Staël, Mrs. Montagu, and Anne Damer were not wanting to give points of light to the picture; but they hardly represent the real womanhood of their time. Femininity was then based upon shallowness, and girls were solemnly warned not to try and ape the acquirements of men, but to keep themselves rigorously within their own ascertained limits. We find a famous school-teacher, under whose fostering care many a court belle was trained for social triumphs, laying down the law on this subject with no uncertain hand, and definitely placing women in their proper station. "Had a *third order* been necessary," she writes naively, "doubtless one would have been created, a *midway* kind of being." In default, however, of this recognized *via media*, she deprecates all impious attempts to bridge over the chasm between the two sexes; and "accounts it a misfortune for a female to be learned, a genius, or in any way a prodigy, as it removes her from her natural sphere.

"Those were days," says a writer in Blackwood, "when superficial teaching was thought the proper teaching for girls; when every science had its feminine language, as Hindu ladies talk with a difference and with softer terminations than their lords: as The Young Ladies' Geography, which is to be read instead of novels; A Young Ladies' Guide to Astronomy; The Use of the Globes for Girls' Schools; and the Ladies' Polite Letter-Writer." What was really necessary for a girl was to learn how to knit, to dance, to curtsy, and to carve; the last-named accomplishment being one of her exclusive privileges. Lady Mary Wortley Montagu received lessons from a professional carving-master, who taught her the art scientifically; and during her father's grand dinners her labors were often so exhausting that translating the Enchiridion must have seemed by comparison a light and easy task. Indeed, after that brilliant baby entrance into the Kitcat Club, very little that was pleasant fell to Lady Mary's share; and years later she recalls the dreary memories of her youth in a letter written to her sister, Lady Mar. "Don't you remember," she asks,

pathetically, "how miserable we were in the little parlor at Thoresby?"

Her own education she always protested was of the worst and flimsiest character, and her girlish scorn at the restraints that cramped and fettered her is expressed vigorously enough in the well-known letter to Bishop Burnet. It was considered almost criminal, she complains, to improve her reason, or even to fancy she had any. To be learned was to be held up to universal ridicule, and the only line of conduct open to her was to play the fool in concert with other women of quality, "whose birth and leisure merely serve to make them the most useless and worthless part of creation." Yet viewed alongside of her contemporaries, Lady Mary's advantages were really quite unusual. She had some little guidance in her studies, with no particular opposition to overcome, and tolerance was as much at any time as a thoughtful girl could hope for. Nearly a century later we find little Mary Fairfax — afterwards Mrs. Somerville, and the most learned woman in England — being taught how to sew, to read her Bible, and to learn the Shorter Catechism; all else being

considered superfluous for a female. Moreover, the child's early application to her books was regarded with great disfavor by her relatives, who plainly thought that no good was likely to come of it. "I wonder," said her rigid aunt to Lady Fairfax, "that you let Mary waste her time in reading!"

"You cannot hammer a girl into anything," says Ruskin, who has constituted himself both champion and mentor of the sex; and perhaps this was the reason that so many of these rigorously drilled and kept-down girls blossomed perversely into brilliant and scholarly women. Nevertheless, it is comforting to turn back for a moment, and see what Holland, in the seventeenth century, could do for her clever children. Mr. Gosse has shown us a charming picture of the three daughters of Roemer Visscher, the poetess Tesselschade and her less famous sisters, — three little girls, whose healthy mental and physical training was happily free from either narrow contraction or hot-house pressure. "All of them," writes Ernestus Brink, "were practiced in very sweet accomplishments. They could play music, paint, write, and engrave on glass, make

poems, cut emblems, embroider all manner of fabrics, and swim well; which last thing they had learned in their father's garden, where there was a canal with water, outside the city." What wonder that these little maidens, with skilled fingers, and clear heads, and vigorous bodies, grew into three keen-witted and charming women, around whom we find grouped that rich array of talent which suddenly raised Holland to a unique literary distinction! What wonder that their influence, alike refining and strengthening, was felt on every hand, and was repaid with universal gratitude and love!

There is a story told of Professor Wilson, that one day, listening to a lecture on education by Dr. Whately, he grew manifestly impatient at the rules laid down, and finally slipped out of the room, exclaiming irately to a friend who followed him, "I always thought God Almighty made man, but *he* says it was the schoolmaster."

In like manner many of us have wondered from time to time whether children are made of such ductile material, and can be as readily moulded to our wishes, as educators would

have us believe. If it be true that nature counts for nothing and training for everything, then what a gap between the boys and girls of two hundred years ago and the boys and girls we know to-day! The rigid bands that once bound the young to decorum have dwindled to a silver thread that snaps under every restive movement. To have "perfectly natural" children seems to be the outspoken ambition of parents, who have succeeded in retrograding their offspring from artificial civilization to that pure and wholesome savagery which is too plainly their ideal. "It is assumed nowadays," declares an angry critic, "that children have come into the world to make a noise; and it is the part of every good parent to put up with it, and to make all household arrangements with a view to their sole pleasure and convenience."

That the children brought up under this relaxed discipline acquire certain merits and charms of their own is an easily acknowledged fact. We are not now alluding to those spoiled and over-indulged little people who are the recognized scourges of humanity, but merely to the boys and girls who have been

allowed from infancy that large degree of freedom which is deemed expedient for enlightened nurseries, and who regulate their own conduct on the vast majority of occasions. They are as a rule light-hearted, truthful, affectionate, and occasionally amusing; but it cannot be denied that they lack that nicety of breeding which was at one time the distinguishing mark of children of the upper classes, and which was in a great measure born of the restraints that surrounded them. The faculty of sitting still without fidgeting, of walking without rushing, and of speaking without screaming can be acquired only under tuition; but it is worth some little trouble to attain. When Sydney Smith remarked that the children of rank were generally so much better bred than the children of the middle classes, he recognized the greater need for self-restraint that entered into their lives. They may have been less natural, perhaps, but they were infinitely more pleasing to his fastidious eyes; and the unconscious grace which he admired was merely the reflection of the universal courtesy that surrounded them. Nor is this all. "The necessity of self-repression," says a recent

writer in Blackwood, "makes room for thought, which those children miss who have no formalities to observe, no customs to respect, who blurt out every irrelevance, who interpose at will with question and opinion as it enters the brain. Children don't learn to talk by chattering to one another, and saying what comes uppermost. Mere listening with intelligence involves an exercise of mental speech, and observant silence opens the pores of the mind as impatient demands for explanation never do."

This is true, inasmuch as it is not the child who is encouraged to talk continually who in the end learns how to arrange and express his ideas. Nor does the fretful desire to be told at once what everything means imply the active mind which parents so fondly suppose; but rather a languid percipience, unable to decipher the simplest causes for itself. Yet where shall we turn to look for the "observant silence," so highly recommended? The young people who observed and were silent have passed away, — little John Ruskin being assuredly the last of the species, — and their places are filled by those to whom observation and silence are alike unknown. This is the

children's age, and all things are subservient to their wishes. Masses of juvenile literature are published annually for their amusement; conversation is reduced steadily to their level while they are present; meals are arranged to suit their hours, and the dishes thereof to suit their palates; studies are made simpler and toys more elaborate with each succeeding year. The hardships they once suffered are now happily ended, the decorum once exacted is fading rapidly away. We accept the situation with philosophy, and only now and then, under the pressure of some new development, are startled into asking ourselves where it is likely to end.

ON THE BENEFITS OF SUPERSTITION.

"We in England," says Mr. Kinglake, "are scarcely sufficiently conscious of the great debt we owe to the wise and watchful press which presides over the formation of our opinions, and which brings about this splendid result, namely, that in matters of belief the humblest of us are lifted up to the level of the most sagacious; so that really a simple cornet in the Blues is no more likely to entertain a foolish belief in ghosts, or witchcraft, or any other supernatural topic, than the Lord High Chancellor or the leader of the House of Commons." This delicate sarcasm, delivered with all the author's habitual serenity of mind, is quoted by Mr. Ruskin in his Art of England; assentingly, indeed, but with a half-concealed dismay that any one could find it in his heart to be funny upon such a distressing subject. When he, Mr.

Ruskin, hurls his satiric shafts against the spirit of modern skepticism, the points are touched with caustic, and betray a deep impatience darkening quickly into wrath. Is it not bad enough that we ride in steam-cars instead of post-chaises, live amid brick houses instead of green fields, and pass by some of the "most accomplished pictures in the world" to stare gaping at the last new machine, with its network of slow-revolving, wicked-looking wheels? If, in addition to these too prominent faults, we are going to frown down the old appealing superstitions, and threaten them, like naughty children, with the corrective discipline of scientific research, he very properly turns his back upon us forever, and distinctly says he has no further message for our ears.

Let us rather, then, approach the subject with the invaluable humility of Don Bernal Dias del Castillo, that gallant soldier who followed the fortunes of Cortés into Mexico, and afterwards penned the Historia Verdadera, an ingenuous narrative of their discoveries, their hardships, and their many battles. In one of these, it seems, the blessed Saint Iago

appeared in the thickest of the fray, mounted on a snow-white charger, leading his beloved Spaniards to victory. Now the *conquestador* freely admits that he himself did not behold the saint; on the contrary, what he *did* see in that particular spot was a cavalier named Francisco de Morla, riding on a chestnut horse. But does he, on that account, puff himself up with pride, and declare that his more fortunate comrades were mistaken? By no means! He is as firmly convinced of the presence of the vision as if it had been apparent to his eyes, and with admirable modesty lays all the blame upon his own unworthiness. "Sinner that I am!" he exclaims devoutly, "why should I have been permitted to behold the blessed apostle?" In the same spirit, honest Peter Walker strained his sight in vain for a glimpse of the ghostly armies that crossed the Clyde in the summer of 1686, and, seeing nothing, was content to believe in them, all the same, on the testimony of his neighbors.

Sir Walter Scott, who appears to have wasted a good deal of time in trying to persuade himself that he put no faith in spirits,

confesses quite humbly, in his old age, that "the tendency to belief in supernatural agencies seems connected with and deduced from the invaluable conviction of the certainty of a future state." And beyond a doubt this tendency was throughout his life the source of many pleasurable emotions. So much so, in fact, that, according to Mr. Pater's theory of happiness, the loss of these emotions, bred in him from childhood, would have been very inadequately repaid by a gain in scientific knowledge. If it be the true wisdom to direct our finest efforts towards multiplying our sensations, and so expanding the brief interval we call life, then the old unquestioning credulity was a more powerful motor in human happiness than any sentiment that fills its ground to-day. In the first place it was closely associated with certain types of beauty, and beauty is one of the tonics now most earnestly recommended to our sick souls. "Les fions d'aut fais" were charming to the very tips of their dewy, trembling wings; the elfin people, who danced in the forest glades under the white moonbeams, danced their way without any difficulty right into the hearts of men;

the swan-maiden, who ventured shyly in the fisher's path, was easily transformed into a loving wife; even the mara, most suspicious and terrible of ghostly visitors, has often laid aside her darker instincts, and developed into a cheerful spouse, with only a tinge of mystery to make her more attractive in her husband's eyes. Melusina combing her golden hair by the bubbling fountain of Lusignan, Undine playing in the rain-drenched forest, the nixie dancing at the village feast with her handsome Flemish lad, and the mermaid reluctantly leaving her watery home to wed the youth who captured her magic seal-skin, all belong to the sisterhood of beauty, and their images did good service in raising the vulgar mind from its enforced contemplation of the sordid troubles, the droning vexations, of life.

Next, the happy believers in the supernatural owed to their simplicity delicious throbs of fear,— not craven cowardice, but that more refined and complex feeling, which is of all sensations the most enthralling, the most elusive, and the most impossible to define. Fear, like all other treacherous gifts, must be handled with discrimination: a thought too

much, and we are brutalized and degraded; but within certain limits it enhances all the pleasures of life. When Captain Forsyth stood behind a tree on a sultry summer morning, and saw the tigress step softly through the long jungle grass, and the affrighted monkeys swing chattering overhead, there must have come upon him that sensation of awe which alone makes courage possible.[1] He knew that his life hung trembling in the balance, and that all depended upon the first shot he fired. He respected, as a sane man would, the mighty strength of his antagonist, her graceful limbs instinct with power, her cruel eyes blinking in the yellow dawn. And born of the fear, which stirred but could not conquer him, came the keen transport of the hunter, who feels that one such supremely heroic moment is worth a year of ordinary life. Without that dread, not only would the joy be lessened, and the glad rebound from danger to a sense of safety lost forever, but the disciplined and manly courage of the English soldier would degenerate into a mere

[1] *The Highlands of Central India.* By Captain James Forsyth.

brutish audacity, hardly above the level of the beast he slays.

In children, this delicate emotion of fear, growing out of their dependent condition, gives dignity and meaning to their courage when they are brave, and a delicious zest to their youthful delinquencies. Gray, in his chilly and melancholy manhood, years after he has resigned himself to never again being "either dirty or amused" as long as he lives, goes back like a flash to the unlawful delight of a schoolboy's stolen freedom: —

> "Still as they run they look behind,
> They hear a voice in every wind,
> And snatch a fearful joy."

And who that has ever watched a party of children, listening with bright eyes and parted lips to some weird, uncanny legend, — like that group of little girls for instance, in Mr. Charles Gregory's picture Tales and Wonders, — can doubt for a moment the "fearful joy" that terror lends them? Nowadays, it is true, their youthful ears are but too well guarded from such indiscretions until they are old enough to scoff at all fantastic folly, and the age at which they learn to scoff is one of

the most astonishing things about our modern progress. They have ceased to read fairy stories, because they no longer believe in fairies; they find Hans Andersen silly, and the Arabian Nights stupid; and the very babies, "skeptics in long-coats," scorn you openly if you venture to hint at Santa Claus. "What did Kriss Kringle bring you this Christmas?" I rashly asked a tiny mite of a girl; and her answer was as emphatic as Betsey Prig's, when, with folded arms and a contemptuous mien, she let fall the ever memorable words, "I don't believe there's no sich a person."

Yet the supernatural, provided it be not too horrible, is legitimate food for a child's mind, nourishes its imagination, inspires a healthy awe, and is death to that precocious pedantry which is the least pleasing trait that children are wont to manifest. While few are willing to go as far as Mr. Ruskin, who, having himself been brought up on fairy legends, confesses that his "first impulse would be to insist upon every story we tell to a child being untrue, and every scene we paint for it impossible," yet a fair proportion of the untrue and

the impossible should enter into its education, and it should be left to the enjoyment of them as long as may be. Those of us who have been happy enough to believe that salamanders basked in the fire and mermaids swam in the deeps, that were-wolves roamed in the forests and witches rode in the storm, are richer by all these unfading pictures and unforgotten memories than our more scrupulously reared neighbors. And what if we could give such things the semblance of reality once more, — could set foot in spirit within the enchanted forest of Broceliande, and enjoy the tempestuous gusts of fear that shook the heart-strings of the Breton peasant, as the great trees drew their mysterious shadows above his head? On either side lurk shadowy forms of elf and fairy, half hidden by the swelling trunks; the wind whispers in the heavy boughs, and he hears their low, malicious laughter; the dry leaves rustle beneath his feet, — he knows their stealthy steps are close behind; a broken twig falls on his shoulder, and he starts trembling, for unseen hands have touched him. Around his neck hang a silver medal of Our Lady and a bit of ash wood given him by a

wise woman, whom many believe a witch: thus is he doubly guarded from the powers of evil. Beyond the forest lies the open path, where wife and children stand waiting by the cottage door. He is a brave man to wander in the gloaming, and if he reaches home there will be much to tell of all that he has seen, and heard, and felt. Should he be devoured by wolves, however, — and there is always this prosaic danger to be apprehended, — then his comrades will relate how he left them and went alone into the haunted woods, and his sorrowing widow will know that the fairies have carried him away, or turned him into stone. And the wise woman, reproached, perhaps, for the impotence of her charms, will say how with her own aged eyes she has three times seen Kourigan, Death's elder brother, flitting before the doomed man, and knew that his fate was sealed. So while fresh tales of mystery cluster round his name, and his children breathe them in trembling whispers by the fireside, their mother will wait hopefully for the spell to be broken, and the lost given back to her arms; until Pierrot, the charcoal-burner, persuades her that a stone remains

a stone until the Judgment Day, and that in the mean time his own hut by the kiln is empty, and he needs a wife.

But superstition, it is claimed, begets cruelty, and cruelty is a vice now most rigorously frowned down by polite society. Daring spirits, like Mr. Besant, may still urge its claims upon our reluctant consideration; Mr. Andrew Lang may pronounce it an essential element of humor; or a purely speculative genius, like Mr. Pater, may venture to show how adroitly it can be used as a help to religious sentiment; but every age has pet vices of its own, and, being singularly intolerant of those it has discarded, is not inclined to listen to any arguments in their favor. Superstition burned old women for witches, dotards for warlocks, and idiots for were-wolves; but in its gentler aspect it often threw a veil of charity over both man and beast. The Greek rustic, who found a water-newt wriggling in his gourd, tossed the little creature back into the stream, remembering that it was the unfortunate Ascalaphus, whom the wrath of Demeter had consigned to this loathsome doom. The mediæval housewife, when startled by a gaunt wolf

gazing through her kitchen window, bethought her that this might be her lost husband, roaming helpless and bewitched, and so gave the starving creature food.

> "O was it war-wolf in the wood?
> Or was it mermaid in the sea?
> Or was it man, or vile woman,
> My ain true love, that misshaped thee?"

The West Indian negress still bestows chicken-soup instead of scalding water on the invading army of black ants, believing that if kindly treated they will show their gratitude in the only way that ants can manifest it, — by taking their departure.

Granted that in these acts of gentleness there are traces of fear and self-consideration; but who shall say that all our good deeds are not built up on some such trestle-work of foibles? "La virtu n'iroit pas si loin, si la vanité ne lui tenoit pas compagnie." And what universal politeness has been fostered by the terror that superstition breeds, what delicate euphemisms containing the very soul of courtesy! Consider the Greeks, who christened the dread furies "Eumenides," or "gracious ones;" the Scotch who warily spoke of

the devil as the "good man," lest his sharp ears should catch a more unflattering title; the Dyak who respectfully mentions the small-pox as "the chief;" the East Indian who calls the tiger "lord" or "grandfather;" and the Laplander, who gracefully alludes to the white bear as "the fur-clad one," and then realize what perfection of breeding was involved in what we are wont to call ignorant credulity.

Again, in the stress of modern life, how little room is left for that most comfortable vanity which whispers in our ears that failures are not faults! Now we are taught from infancy that we must rise or fall upon our own merits; that vigilance wins success, and incapacity means ruin. But before the world had grown so pitilessly logical there was no lack of excuses for the defeated, and of unflattering comments for the strong. Did some shrewd Cornish miner open a rich vein of ore, then it was apparent to his fellow-toilers that the knackers had been at work, leading him on by their mysterious tapping to this more fruitful field. But let him proceed warily, for the knacker, like its German brother, the kobold, is but a capricious sprite, and some day may

beguile him into a mysterious passage or long-forgotten chamber in the mine, whence he shall never more return. His bones will whiten in their prison, while his spirit, wandering restlessly among the subterranean corridors, will be heard on Christmas Eve, hammering wearily away till the gray dawn brightens in the east. Or did some prosperous farmer save his crop while his neighbors' corn was blighted, and raise upon his small estate more than their broader acres could be forced to yield, there was no opportunity afforded him for pride or self-congratulation. Only the witch's art could bring about such strange results, and the same sorceries that had aided him had, doubtless, been the ruin of his friends. He was a lucky man if their indignation went no further than muttered phrases and averted heads. Does not Pliny tell us the story of Caius Furius Cresinus, whose heavy crops awoke such mingled anger and suspicion in his neighbors' hearts that he was accused in the courts of conjuring their grain and fruit into his own scanty ground? If a woman aspired to be neater than her gossips, or to spin more wool than they were able

to display, it was only because the pixies labored for her at night; turning her wheel briskly in the moonlight, splitting the wood, and drawing the water, while she drowsed idly in her bed.

> "And every night the pixies good
> Drive round the wheel with sound subdued,
> And leave — in this they never fail —
> A silver penny in the pail."

Even to the clergy this engaging theory brought its consolations. When the Reverend Lucas Jacobson Debes, pastor of Thorshaven in 1670, found that his congregation was growing slim, he was not forced, in bitterness of spirit, to ask himself were his sermons dull, but promptly laid all the blame upon the *biergen-trold*, the spectres of the mountains, whom he angrily accused, in a lengthy homily, of disturbing his flock, and even pushing their discourtesy so far as to carry them off bodily before his discourse was completed.

Indeed, it is to the clergy that we are indebted for much interesting information concerning the habits of goblins, witches, and gnomes. The Reverend Robert Kirke, of

Aberfoyle, Perthshire, divided his literary labors impartially between a translation of the Psalms into Gaelic verse and an elaborate treatise on the "Subterranean and for the most part Invisible People, heretofore going under the name of Elves, Faunes, and Fairies, or the like," which was printed, with the author's name attached, in 1691. Here, unsullied by any taint of skepticism, we have an array of curious facts that would suggest the closest intimacy between the rector and the "Invisible People," who at any rate concealed nothing from *his* eyes. He tells us gravely that they marry, have children, die, and are buried, very much like ordinary mortals; that they are inveterate thieves, stealing everything, from the milk in the dairy to the baby lying on its mother's breast; that they can fire their elfin arrow-heads so adroitly that the weapon penetrates to the heart without breaking the skin, and he himself has seen animals wounded in this manner; that iron in any shape or form is a terror to them, not for the same reason that Solomon misliked it, but on account of the proximity of the great iron mines to the place of eternal punishment; and

— strangest of all — that they can read and write, and have extensive libraries, where light and toyish books alternate with ponderous volumes on abstruse mystical subjects. Only the Bible may not be found among them.

How Mr. Kirke acquired all these particulars — whether, like John Dietrich, he lived in the Elfin Mound and grew wise on elfin wisdom, or whether he adopted a less laborious and secluded method — does not transpire. But one thing is certain: he was destined to pay a heavy price for his unhallowed knowledge. The fairies, justly irritated at such an open revelation of their secrets, revenged themselves signally by carrying off the offender, and imprisoning him beneath the dun-shi, or goblin hill, where he has since had ample opportunity to pursue his investigations. It is true, his parishioners supposed he had died of apoplexy, and, under that impression, buried him in Aberfoyle churchyard; but his successor, the Rev. Dr. Grahame, informs us of the widespread belief concerning his true fate. An effort was even made to rescue him from his captivity, but it failed through the neglect of a kinsman, Grahame of Duchray;

and Robert Kirke, like Thomas of Ercildoune and the three miners of the Kuttenberg, still "drees his weird" in the enchanted halls of elfland.

When the unfortunate witches of Warbois were condemned to death, on the testimony of the Throgmorton children, Sir Samuel Cromwell, as lord of the manor, received forty pounds out of their estate; which sum he turned into a rent-charge of forty shillings yearly, for the endowment of an annual lecture on witchcraft, to be preached by a doctor or bachelor of divinity, of Queen's College, Cambridge. Thus he provided for his tenants a good sound church doctrine on this interesting subject, and we may rest assured that the sermons were far from quieting their fears, or lulling them into a skeptical indifference. Indeed, more imposing names than Sir Samuel Cromwell's appear in the lists to do battle for cherished superstitions. Did not the devout and conscientious Baxter firmly believe in the powers of witches, especially after "hearing their sad confessions;" and was not the gentle and learned Addison more than half disposed to believe in them, too? Does

not Bacon avow that a "well-regulated" astrology might become the medium of many beneficial truths; and did not the scholarly Dominican, Stephen of Lusignan, expand the legend of Melusina into so noble a history, that the great houses of Luxembourg, Rohan, and Sassenaye altered their pedigrees, so as to claim descent from that illustrious nymph? Even the Emperor Henry VII. was as proud of his fishy ancestress as was Godfrey de Bouillon of his mysterious grandsire, Helias, the Knight of the Swan, better known to us as the Lohengrin of Wagner's opera; while among more modest annals appear the families of Fantome and Dobie, each bearing a goblin on their crest, in witness of their claim to some shadowy supernatural kinship.

There is often a marked contrast between the same superstition as developed in different countries, and in the same elfin folk, who please or terrify us according to the gay or serious bent of their mortal interpreters. While the Keltic ourisk is bright and friendly, with a tinge of malice and a strong propensity to blunder, the English brownie is a more clever and audacious sprite, the Scottish bogle is a

sombre and dangerous acquaintance, and the Dutch Hudikin an ungainly counterpart of Puck, with hardly a redeeming quality, save a lumbering fashion of telling the truth when it is least expected. It was Hudikin who foretold the murder of James I. of Scotland; though why he should have left the dikes of Holland for the bleak Highland hills it is hard to say, more especially as there were murders enough at home to keep him as busy as Cassandra. So, too, when the English witches rode up the chimney and through the storm-gusts to their unhallowed meetings, they apparently confined their attention to the business in hand, having perhaps enough to occupy them in managing their broomstick steeds. But when the Scottish hags cried, "Horse and hattock in the devil's name!" and rushed fiercely through the tempestuous night, the unlucky traveler crossed himself and trembled, lest in very wantonness they aim their magic arrows at his heart. Isobel Gowdie confessed at her trial to having fired in this manner at the Laird of the Park, as he rode through a ford; but the influence of the running water turned her dart aside, and she was soundly cuffed by Bessie

Hay, another witch, for her awkwardness in choosing such an unpropitious moment.[1] In one respect alone this evil sisterhood were all in harmony. By charms and spells they revenged themselves terribly on their enemies, and inflicted malicious injuries on their friends. It was as easy for them to sink a ship in mid-ocean as to dry the milk in a cow's udder, or to make a strong man pine away while his waxen image was consumed inch by inch on the witch's smouldering hearth.

This instinctive belief in evil spells is the essence, not of witchcraft only, but of every form of superstition, from the days of Thessalian magic to the brutish rites of the Louisiana Voodoo. It has brought to the scaffold women of gentle blood, like Janet Douglas, Lady Glamis, and to the stake visionary enthusiasts like Jeanne d'Arc. It confronts us from every page of history, it stares at us from the columns of the daily press. It has provided an outlet for fear, hope, love, and hatred, and a weapon for every passion that stirs the soul of man. It is equally at home in all parts of the

[1] *Letters on Demonology and Witchcraft.* By Sir Walter Scott.

world, and has entered freely into the religion, the traditions, and the folk-lore of all nations. Actæon flying as a stag from the pursuit of his own hounds; Circe's swinish captives groveling at their troughs; Björn turned into a bear through the malice of his stepmother, and hunted to death by his father, King Hring; the Swans of Lir floating mournfully on the icy waters of the Moyle; the *loup-garou* lurking in the forests of Brittany, and the *oborot* coursing over the Russian steppes; Merlin sleeping in the gloomy depths of Broceliande, and Raknar buried fifty fathoms below the coast of Helluland, are alike the victims

"Of woven paces and of waving hands."

whether the spell be cast by an outraged divinity, or by the cruel hand of a malignant foe.

In 1857, Mr. Newton discovered at Cnidos fragments of a buried and ruined chapel, sacred to Demeter and Persephone. In it were three marble figures of great beauty, some small votive images of baked earth, several bronze lamps, and a number of thin leaden rolls, pierced with holes for the convenience of hanging them around the chapel walls. On these rolls were inscribed the diræ, or spells,

devoting some enemy to the infernal gods, and the motive for the suppliant's ill-will was given with great *naïveté* and earnestness. One woman binds another who has lured away her lover; a second, the enemy who has accused her of poisoning her husband; a third, the thief who has stolen her bracelet; a fourth, the man who has robbed her of a favorite drinking-horn; a fifth, the acquaintance who has failed to return a borrowed garment; and so on through a long list of grievances.[1] It is evident this form of prayer was quite a common occurrence, and, as combining a religious rite with a comfortable sense of retaliation, must have been exceptionally soothing to the worshiper's mind. Persephone was appeased and their own wrongs atoned for by this simple act of devotion; and would that it were given to us now to inscribe, and by inscribing doom, all those who have borrowed and failed to return our books; would that by scribbling some strong language on a piece of lead we could avenge the lamentable gaps on our shelves, and send the ghosts of the wrong-doers howling dismally into the eternal shades of Tartarus.

[1] *The Myth of Demeter and Persephone.* By Walter Pater.

The saddest thing about these faded superstitions is that the very men who have studied them most accurately are often least susceptible to their charms. In their eagerness to trace back every myth to a common origin, and to prove, with or without reason, that they one and all arose from the observation of natural phenomena, too many writers either overlook entirely the beauty and meaning of the tale, or treat it with a contemptuous indifference very hard to understand. Mr. Baring-Gould, a most honorable exception to this evil rule, takes occasion now and then to deal some telling blows at the extravagant theorists who persist in maintaining that every tradition bears its significance on its surface, and who, following up their preconceived opinions, cruelly overtax the credulity of their readers. He himself has shown conclusively that many Aryan myths are but allegorical representations of natural forces; but in these cases the connection is always distinctly traced and easily understood. It is not hard for any of us to perceive the likeness between the worm Schamir, the hand of glory, and the lightning, when their peculiar properties are so much

alike; or to behold in the Sleeping Beauty or Thorn-Rose the ice-bound earth slumbering through the long winter months, until the sun-god's kisses win her back to life and warmth. But when we are asked to believe that William Tell is the storm-cloud, with his arrow of lightning and his iris bow bent against the sun, which is resting like a coin or a golden apple on the edge of the horizon, we cannot but feel, with the author of Curious Myths, that a little too much is exacted from us. "I must protest," he says, "against the manner in which our German friends fasten rapaciously upon every atom of history, sacred and profane, and demonstrate all heroes to represent the sun; all villains to be the demons of night or winter; all sticks and spears and arrows to be the lightning; all cows and sheep and dragons and swans to be clouds."

But then it must be remembered that Mr. Baring-Gould is the most tolerant and catholic of writers, with hardly a hobby he can call his own. Sympathizing with the sad destruction of William Tell, he casts a lance in honor of Saint George against Reynolds and Gibbon, and manifests a lurking weakness for mer-

maids, divining-rods, and the Wandering Jew. He is to be congratulated on his early training, for he assures us he believed, on the testimony of his Devonshire nurse, that all Cornishmen had tails, until a Cornish bookseller stoutly denied the imputation, and enlightened his infant mind. He has the rare and happy faculty of writing upon all mythical subjects with grace, sympathy, and *vraisemblance*. Even when there can be no question of credulity either with himself or with his readers, he is yet content to write as though for the time he believes. Just as Mr. Birrell advises us to lay aside our moral sense when we begin the memoirs of an attractive scamp, and to recall it carefully when we have finished, so Mr. Baring-Gould generously lays aside his enlightened skepticism when he undertakes to tell us about sirens and were-wolves, and remembers that he is of the nineteenth century only when his task is done.

This is precisely what Mr. John Fiske is unable or unwilling to accomplish. He cannot for a moment forget how much better he knows; and instead of an indulgent smile at the delightful follies of our ancestors, we de-

tect here and there through his very valuable pages something unpleasantly like a sneer. "Where the modern calmly taps his forehead," explains Mr. Fiske, "and says, 'Arrested development!' the terrified ancient made the sign of the cross, and cried, 'Were-wolf!'"[1] Now a more disagreeable object than the "modern" tapping his forehead, like Dr. Blimber, and offering a sensible elucidation of every mystery, it would be hard to find. The ignorant peasant making his sign of the cross is not only more picturesque, but he is more companionable, — in books, at least, — and it is of far greater interest to try to realize how *he* felt when the specimen of "arrested development" stole past him in the shadow of the woods. There is, after all, a mysterious horror about the lame boy, — some impish changeling of evil parentage, foisted on hell, perhaps, as Nadir thrust his earth-born baby into heaven, — who every Midsummer Night and every Christmas Eve summoned the were-wolves to their secret meeting, whence they rushed ravenously over the German forests. The girdle of human skin, three finger-breadths

[1] *Myths and Mythmakers.*

wide, which wrought the transformation; the telltale hairs in the hollow of the hand which betrayed the wolfish nature; the fatality which doomed one of every seven sisters to this dreadful enchantment, and the trifling accidents which brought about the same undesirable result are so many handles by which we grasp the strange emotions that swayed the mediæval man. Jacque Roulet and Jean Grenier,[1] as mere maniacs and cannibals, fill every heart with disgust; but as were-wolves an awful mystery wraps them round, and the mind is distracted from pity for their victims to a fascinated consideration of their own tragic doom. A blood-thirsty idiot is an object that no one cares to think about; but a wolf-fiend, urged to deeds of violence by an impulse he cannot resist, is one of those ghastly creations that the folk-lore of every country has placed sharply and persistently before our startled eyes. Yet surely there is a touch of comedy in the story told by Van Hahn, of an unlucky freemason, who, having divulged the secrets of his order, was pursued across the Pyrenees by the master of his lodge in the

[1] *Book of Were-Wolves.* By Baring-Gould.

form of a were-wolf, and escaped only by taking refuge in an empty cottage, and hiding under the bed.

"To us who are nourished from childhood," says Mr. Fiske again, "on the truths revealed by science, the sky is known to be merely an optical appearance, due to the partial absorption of the solar rays in passing through a thick stratum of atmospheric air; the clouds are known to be large masses of watery vapor, which descend in rain-drops when sufficiently condensed; and the lightning is known to be a flash of light accompanying an electric discharge." But the blue sky-sea of Aryan folk-lore, in which the cloud-flakes floated as stately swans, drew many an eye to the contemplation of its loveliness, and touched many a heart with the sacred charm of beauty. On that mysterious sea strange vessels sailed from unknown shores, and once a mighty anchor was dropped by the sky mariners, and fell right into a little English graveyard, to the great amazement of the humble congregation just coming out from church. The sensation of freedom and space afforded by this conception of the heavens is a delicious contrast to the conceit of the Persian poet, —

"That inverted Bowl they call the Sky,
Whereunder crawling cooped we live and die;"

or to the Semitic legend, which described the firmament as made of hammered plate, with little windows for rain, — a device so poor and barbaric, that we wonder how any man could look up into the melting blue and admit such a sordid fancy into his soul.

"Scientific knowledge, even in the most modest men," confesses Dr. Oliver Wendell Holmes, "has mingled with it something which partakes of insolence. Absolute, peremptory facts are bullies, and those who keep company with them are apt to get a bullying habit of mind." Such an admission from so genial and kindly a source should suffice to put us all on the defensive. It is not agreeable to be bullied even upon those matters which are commonly classed as facts; but when we come to the misty region of dreams and myths and superstitions, let us remember, with Lamb, that "we do not know the laws of that country," and with him generously forbear to "set down our ancestors in the gross for fools." We have lost forever the fantasies that enriched them. Not for us are the pink

and white lions that gamboled in the land of Prester John, nor his onyx floors, imparting courage to all who trod on them. Not for us the Terrestrial Paradise, with its "Welle of Youthe, whereat thei that drynken semen alle weys yongly, and lyven withouten sykeness;"[1] nor the Fortunate Isles beyond the Western Sea, where spring was ever green; where youths and maidens danced hand in hand on the dewy grass, where the cows ungrudgingly gave milk enough to fill whole ponds instead of milking-pails, and where wizards and usurers could never hope to enter. The doors of these enchanted spots are closed upon us, and their key, like Excalibur, lies hidden where no hand can grasp it.

"The whole wide world is painted gray on gray,
And Wonderland forever is gone past."

All we can do is to realize our loss with becoming modesty, and now and then cast back a wistful glance

"where underneath
The shelter of the quaint kiosk, there sigh
A troup of Fancy's little China Dolls,
Who dream and dream, with damask round their loins,
And in their hands a golden tulip flower."

[1] *Travels of Sir John Mandeville.*

WHAT CHILDREN READ.

It is part of the irony of life that our discriminating taste for books should be built up on the ashes of an extinct enjoyment. We spend a great deal of our time in learning what literature is good, and a great deal more in attuning our minds to its reception, rightly convinced that, by the training of our intellectual faculties, we are unlocking one of the doors through which sweetness and light may enter. We are fond of reading, too, and have always maintained with Macaulay that we would rather be a poor man with books than a great king without, though luckily for our resolution, and perhaps for his, such a choice has never yet been offered. Books, we say, are our dearest friends, and so, with true friendly acuteness, we are prompt to discover their faults, and take great credit in our ingenuity. But all this time, somewhere about the house, curled up, may be, in a nursery window, or hidden in a freezing attic, a child is poring

over The Three Musketeers, lost to any consciousness of his surroundings, incapable of analyzing his emotions, breathless with mingled fear and exultation over his heroes' varying fortunes, and drinking in a host of vivid impressions that are absolutely ineffaceable from his mind. We cannot read in that fashion any longer, but we only wish we could. Thackeray used to sigh in middle age over the lost delights of five shillings' worth of pastry; but what was the pleasure of eating tarts to the glamour cast over us by our first romance, to the enchanted hours we spent with Sintram by the sea-shore, or with Nydia in the darkened streets of Pompeii, or perhaps — if we were not too carefully watched — with Emily in those dreadful vaults beneath Udolpho's walls!

Nor is it fiction only that strongly excites the imagination of a child. History is not to him what it is to us, a tangle of disputed facts, doubtful theories, and conflicting evidence. He grasps its salient points with simple directness, absorbs them into his mind with tolerable accuracy, and passes judgment on them with enviable ease. To him, histori-

cal characters are at least as real as those of romance, which they are very far from being to us, and he enters into their impressions and motives with a facile sympathy which we rarely feel. Not only does he firmly believe that Marcus Curtius leaped into the gulf, but he has not yet learned to question the expediency of the act; and, having never been enlightened by Mr. Grote, the black broth of Lykurgus is as much a matter of fact to him as the bread and butter upon his own breakfast table. Sir Walter Scott tells us that even the dinner-bell — most welcome sound to boyish ears — failed to win him from his rapt perusal of Percy's Reliques of Ancient Poetry; but Gibbon, as a lad, found the passage of the Goths over the Danube just as engrossing, and, stifling the pangs of hunger, preferred to linger fasting in their company. The great historian's early love for history has furnished Mr. Bagehot with one more proof of the fascination of such records for the youthful mind, and he bids us at the same time consider from what a firm and tangible standpoint it regards them. "Youth," he writes, "has a principle of consolidation. In history, the whole comes

in boyhood; the details later, and in manhood. The wonderful series going far back to the times of old patriarchs with their flocks and herds, the keen-eyed Greek, the stately Roman, the watchful Jew, the uncouth Goth, the horrid Hun, the settled picture of the unchanging East, the restless shifting of the rapid West, the rise of the cold and classical civilization, its fall, the rough, impetuous Middle Ages, the vague warm picture of ourselves and home, — when did we learn these? Not yesterday, nor to-day, but long ago, in the first dawn of reason, in the original flow of fancy. What we learn afterwards are but the accurate littlenesses of the great topic, the dates and tedious facts. Those who begin late learn only these; but the happy first feel the mystic associations and the progress of the whole." [1]

If this be true, and the child's mind be not only singularly alive to new impressions, but quick to concentrate its knowledge into a consistent whole, the value and importance of his early reading can hardly be overestimated. That much anxiety has been felt upon the subject is proven by the cry of self-congratulation

[1] *Literary Studies*, vol. ii.

that rises on every side of us to-day. We are on the right track at last, the press and the publishers assure us; and with tons of healthy juvenile literature flooding the markets every year, our American boys and girls stand fully equipped for the intellectual battles of life. But if we will consider the matter in a dispassionate and less boastful light, we shall see that the good accomplished is mainly of a negative character. By providing cheap and wholesome reading for the young, we have partly succeeded in driving from the field that which was positively bad; yet nothing is easier than to overdo a reformation, and, through the characteristic indulgence of American parents, children are drugged with a literature whose chief merit is its harmlessness. These little volumes, nicely written, nicely printed, and nicely illustrated, are very useful in their way; but they are powerless to awaken a child's imagination, or to stimulate his mental growth. If stories, they merely introduce him to a phase of life with which he is already familiar; if historical, they aim at showing him a series of detached episodes, broken pictures of the mighty whole, shorn of its "mys-

tic associations," and stirring within his soul no stronger impulse than that of a cheaply gratified curiosity.

Not that children's books are to be neglected or contemned. On the contrary, they are always helpful, and in the average nursery have grown to be a recognized necessity. But when supplied with a too lavish hand, a child is tempted to read nothing else, and his mind becomes shrunken for lack of a vigorous stimulant to excite and expand it. "Children," wrote Sir Walter Scott, "derive impulses of a powerful and important kind from hearing things that they cannot entirely comprehend. It is a mistake to write down to their understanding. Set them on the scent, and let them puzzle it out." Sir Walter himself, be it observed, in common with most little people of genius, got along strikingly well without any juvenile literature at all. He shouted the ballad of Hardyknute, to the great annoyance of his aunt's visitors, long before he knew how to read, and listened at his grandmother's knee to her stirring tales about Watt of Harden, Wight Willie of Aikwood, Jamie Telfer of the fair Dodhead, and a host of border

heroes whose picturesque robberies were the glory of their sober and respectable descendants. Two or three old books which lay in the window-seat were explored for his amusement in the dreary winter days. Ramsay's Tea-Table Miscellany, a mutilated copy of Josephus, and Pope's translation of the Iliad appear to have been his favorites, until, when about eight years old, a happy chance threw him under the spell of the two great poets who have swayed most powerfully the pliant imaginations of the young. "I found," he writes in his early memoirs, "within my mother's dressing-room (where I slept at one time) some odd volumes of Shakespeare; nor can I easily forget the rapture with which I sate up in my shirt reading them by the light of a fire in her apartment, until the bustle of the family rising from supper warned me it was time to creep back to my bed, where I was supposed to have been safely deposited since nine o'clock." And a little later he adds, "Spenser I could have read forever. Too young to trouble myself about the allegory, I considered all the knights, and ladies, and dragons, and giants in their outward and exoteric sense,

and Heaven only knows how delighted I was to find myself in such society!"

"How much of our poetry," it has been asked, "owes its start to Spenser, when the Fairy Queen was a household book, and lay in the parlor window-seat?" And how many brilliant fancies have emanated from those same window-seats, which Montaigne so keenly despised? There, where the smallest child could climb with ease, lay piled up in a corner, within the reach of his little hands, the few precious volumes which perhaps comprised the literary wealth of the household. Those were not days when over-indulgence and a multiplicity of books robbed reading of its healthy zest. We know that in the window-seat of Cowley's mother's room lay a copy of the Fairy Queen, which to her little son was a source of unfailing delight, and Pope has recorded the ecstasy with which, as a lad, he pored over this wonderful poem; but then neither Cowley nor Pope had the advantage of following Oliver Optic through the slums of New York, or living with some adventurous "boy hunters" in the jungles of Central Africa. On the other hand, there is a deli-

cious account of Bentham, in his early childhood, climbing to the height of a huge stool, and sitting there night after night reading Rapin's history by the light of two candles; a weird little figure, whose only counterpart in literature is the small John Ruskin propped up solemnly in his niche, "like an idol," and hemmed in from the family reach by the table on which his book reposed. It is quite evident that Bentham found the mental nutrition he wanted in Rapin's rather dreary pages, just as Pope and Cowley found it in Spenser, Ruskin in the Iliad, and Burns in the marvelous stories told by that "most ignorant and superstitious old woman," who made the poet afraid of his own shadow, and who, as he afterwards freely acknowledged, fanned within his soul the kindling flame of genius.

Look where we will, we find the author's future work reflected in the intellectual pastimes of his childhood. Madame de Genlis, when but six years old, perused with unflagging interest the ten solid volumes of Clélie, — a task which would appall the most stout-hearted novel-reader of to-day. Gibbon turned as instinctively to facts as Scott and

Burns to fiction. Macaulay surely learned from his beloved Æneid the art of presenting a dubious statement with all the vigorous coloring of truth. Wordsworth congratulated himself and Coleridge that, as children, they had ranged at will

> "through vales
> Rich with indigenous produce, open grounds
> Of fancy;"

Coleridge, in his turn, was wont to express his sense of superiority over those who had not read fairy tales when they were young, and Charles Lamb, who was plainly of the same way of thinking, wrote to him hotly on the subject of the "cursed Barbauld crew," and demanded how he would ever have become a poet, if, instead of being fed with tales and old wives' fables in his infancy, he had been crammed with geography, natural history, and other useful information. What a picture we have of Cardinal Newman's sensitive and flexible mind in these few words which bear witness to his childish musings! "I used to wish," he says in the third chapter of the Apologia, "that the Arabian Nights were true; my imagination ran on unknown

influences, on magical powers and talismans. . . . I thought life might be a dream, or I an angel, and all the world a deception, my fellow angels, by a playful device, concealing themselves from me, and deceiving me with the semblance of a material world." Alongside of this poetic revelation may be placed Cobbett's sketch of himself: a sturdy country lad of eleven, in a blue smock and red garters, standing before the bookseller's shop in Richmond, with an empty stomach, threepence in his pocket, and a certain little book called The Tale of a Tub contending with his hunger for the possession of that last bit of money. In the end, mind conquered matter: the threepence was invested in the volume, and the homeless little reader curled himself under a haystack, and forgot all about his supper in the strange, new pleasure he was enjoying. "The book was so different," he writes, "from anything that I had ever read before, it was something so fresh to my mind, that, though I could not understand some parts of it, it delighted me beyond description, and produced what I have always considered a sort of birth of intellect. I read on till

it was dark, without any thought of food or bed. When I could see no longer, I put my little book in my pocket and tumbled down by the side of the stack, where I slept till the birds of Kew Gardens awakened me in the morning. . . . I carried that volume about with me wherever I went; and when I lost it in a box that fell overboard in the Bay of Fundy, the loss gave me greater pain than I have since felt at losing thousands of pounds."

As for Lamb's views on the subject of early reading, they are best expressed in his triumphant vindication of Bridget Elia's happily neglected education: "She was tumbled by accident or design into a spacious closet of good old English books, without much selection or prohibition, and browsed at will upon that fair and wholesome pasturage. Had I twenty girls they should be brought up exactly in this fashion." It is natural that but few parents are anxious to risk so hazardous an experiment, especially as the training of "incomparable old maids" is hardly the recognized summit of maternal ambition; but Bridget Elia at least ran no danger of intellectual starvation, while, if we pursue a mod-

ern school-girl along the track of her self-chosen reading, we shall be astonished that so much printed matter can yield so little mental nourishment. She has begun, no doubt, with childish stories, bright and well-written, probably, but following each other in such quick succession that none of them have left any distinct impression on her mind. Books that children read but once are of scant service to them; those that have really helped to warm our imaginations and to train our faculties are the few old friends we know so well that they have become a portion of our thinking selves. At ten or twelve the little girl aspires to something partly grown-up, to those nondescript tales which, trembling ever on the brink of sentiment, seem afraid to risk the plunge; and with her appetite whetted by a course of this unsatisfying diet, she is soon ripe for a little more excitement and a great deal more love-making, so graduates into Rhoda Broughton and the "Duchess," at which point her intellectual career is closed. She has no idea, even, of what she has missed in the world of books. She tells you that she "don't care for Dick-

ens," and "can't get interested in Scott," with a placidity that plainly shows she lays the blame for this state of affairs on the two great masters who have amused and charmed the world. As for Northanger Abbey, or Emma, she would as soon think of finding entertainment in Henry Esmond. She has probably never read a single masterpiece of our language; she has never been moved by a noble poem, or stirred to the quick by a well-told page of history; she has never opened the pores of her mind for the reception of a vigorous thought, or the solution of a mental problem; yet she may be found daily in the circulating library, and is seldom visible on the street without a book or two under her arm.

"In the love-novels all the heroines are very desperate," wrote little Marjorie Fleming in her diary, nearly eighty years ago, and added somewhat plaintively, "Isabella will not allow me to speak of lovers and heroins," — yearning, as we can see, over the forbidden topic, and mutable in her spelling, as befits her tender age. But what books had *she* read, this bright-eyed, healthy, winsome little girl, —

eight years old when she died, — the favorite companion of Sir Walter Scott, and his comfort in many a moment of fatigue and depression? We can follow her path easily enough, thanks to those delicious, misspelt scrawls in which she has recorded her childish verdicts. "Thomson is a beautiful author," she writes at six, "and Pope, but nothing to Shakespear, of which I have a little knolege. Macbeth is a pretty composition, but awful one. . . . The Newgate Calender is very instructive." And again, "Tom Jones and Grey's Elegy in a country churchyard," surely never classed together before, "are both excellent, and much spoke of by both sex, particularly by the men. . . . Doctor Swift's works are very funny; I got some of them by heart. . . . Miss Egward's [Edgeworth's] tails are very good, particularly some that are much adapted for youth, as Laz Lawrance and Tarleton." Then with a sudden jump, "I am reading the Mysteries of Udolpho. I am much interested in the fate of poor poor Emily. . . . Morehead's sermons are, I hear, much praised, but I never read sermons of any kind; but I read novelettes and my Bible, and I never forget it or my prayers."

It is apparent that she read a great deal which would now hardly be considered desirable for little girls, but who can quarrel with the result? Had the bright young mind been starved on Dotty Dimple and Little Prudy books, we might have missed the quaintest bit of autobiography in the English tongue, those few scattered pages which, with her scraps of verse and tender little letters, were so carefully preserved by a loving sister after Pet Maidie's death. Far too young and innocent to be harmed by Tom Jones or the "funny" Doctor Swift, we may perhaps doubt whether she had penetrated very deeply into the Newgate Calendar, notwithstanding a further assertion on her part that "the history of all the malcontents as ever was hanged is amusing." But that she had the "little knolege" she boasted of Shakespeare is proven by the fact that her recitations from King John affected Scott, to use his own words, "as nothing else could do." He would sob outright when the little creature on his knee repeated, quivering with suppressed emotion, those heart-breaking words of Constance: —

> "For I am sick and capable of fears,
> Oppressed with wrong, and therefore full of fears;"

and, knowing the necessity of relaxing a mind so highly wrought, he took good care that she should not be without healthy childish reading. We have an amusing picture of her consoling herself with fairy tales, when exiled, for her restlessness, to the foot of her sister's bed; and one of the first copies of Rosamond, and Harry and Lucy found its way to Marjorie Fleming, with Sir Walter Scott's name written on the fly-leaf.

Fairy tales, and Harry and Lucy! But the real, old-fashioned, earnest, half-sombre fairy tales of our youth have slipped from the hands of children into those of folk-lore students, who are busy explaining all their flavor out of them; while as for Miss Edgeworth, the little people of to-day cannot be persuaded that she is not dull and prosy. Yet what keen pleasure have her stories given to generations of boys and girls, who in their time have grown to be clever men and women! Hear what Miss Thackeray, that loving student of children and of childish ways, has to record about them. "When I look back," she writes,

"upon my own youth, I seem to have lived in company with a delightful host of little playmates, bright, busy children, whose cheerful presence remains more vividly in my mind than that of many of the real little boys and girls who used to appear and disappear disconnectedly, as children do in childhood, when friendship and companionship depend almost entirely upon the convenience of grown-up people. Now and again came little cousins or friends to share our games, but day by day, constant and unchanging, ever to be relied upon, smiled our most lovable and friendly companions: simple Susan, lame Jervas, the dear little merchants, Jem, the widow's son, with his arms around old Lightfoot's neck, the generous Ben, with his whip-cord and his useful proverb of 'Waste not, want not,'— all of these were there in the window corner waiting our pleasure. After Parents' Assistant, to which familiar words we attached no meaning whatever, came Popular Tales in big brown volumes off a shelf in the lumber-room of an apartment in an old house in Paris; and as we opened the books, lo! creation widened to our view. England, Ireland, America,

Turkey, the mines of Golconda, the streets of Bagdad, thieves, travelers, governesses, natural philosophy, and fashionable life were all laid under contribution, and brought interest and adventure to our humdrum nursery corner." [1]

And have these bright and varied pictures, "these immortal tales," as Mr. Matthew Arnold termed them, lost their power to charm, that they are banished from our modern nursery corners; or is it because their didactic purpose is too thinly veiled, or — as I have sometimes fancied — because their authoress took so moderate a view of children's functions and importance? If we place Miss Edgeworth's and Miss Alcott's stories side by side, we shall see that the contrast between them lies not so much in the expected dissimilarity of style and incident as in the utterly different standpoint from which their writers regard the aspirations and responsibilities of childhood. Take, for instance, Miss Edgeworth's Rosamond and Miss Alcott's Eight Cousins, both of them books purporting to show the gradual development of a little girl's character under kindly and stimulating influences. Rosamond,

[1] *A Book of Sibyls.*

who is said to be a portrait of Maria Edgeworth herself, is from first to last the undisputed heroine of the volume which bears her name. Laura may be much wiser, Godfrey far more clever; but neither of them usurps for a moment their sister's place as the central figure of the narrative, round whom our interest clings. But when we come to consider her position in her own family, we find it strangely insignificant. The foolish, warm-hearted, impetuous little girl is of importance to the household only through the love they bear her. It is plain her opinions do not carry much weight, and she is never called on to act as an especial providence to any one. We do not behold her winning Godfrey away from his cigar, or Orlando from fast companions, or correcting anybody's faults, in fact, except her own, which are numerous enough, and give her plenty of concern.

Now with Rose, the bright little heroine of Eight Cousins, and of its sequel A Rose in Bloom, everything is vastly different. She is of the utmost importance to all the grown-up people in the book, most of whom, it must be acknowledged, are extremely silly and inca-

pable. Her aunts set the very highest value upon her society, and receive it with gratified rapture; while among her male cousins she is from the first like a missionary in the Feejees. It is she who cures them of their boyish vices, obtaining in return from their supine mothers "a vote of thanks, which made her feel as if she had done a service to her country." At thirteen she discovers that "girls are made to take care of boys," and with dauntless assurance sets about her self-appointed task. "You boys need somebody to look after you," she modestly announces, — most of them are her seniors, by the way, and all have parents, — "so I 'm going to do it; for girls are nice peacemakers, and know how to manage people." Naturally, to a young person holding these advanced views of life, Miss Edgeworth's limited field of action seems a very spiritless affair, and we find Rose expressing herself with characteristic energy on the subject of the purple jar, declaring that Rosamond's mother was "regularly mean," and that she "always wanted to shake that woman, though she was a model mamma"! As we read the audacious words, we half expect to see, rising from the

mists of story-book land, the indignant ghost of little English Rosamond, burning to defend, with all her old impetuosity, the mother whom she so dearly loved. It is true, she had no sense of a "mission," this commonplace but very amusing little girl. She never, like Rose, adopted a pauper infant, or made friends with a workhouse orphan; she never vetoed pretty frocks in favor of philanthropy, or announced that she would "have nothing to do with love until she could prove that she was something beside a housekeeper and a baby-tender." In fact, she was probably taught that love and matrimony and babies were not proper subjects for discussion in the polite society for which she was so carefully reared. The hints that are given her now and then on such matters by no means encourage a free expression of any unconventional views. "It is particularly amiable in a woman to be ready to yield, and avoid disputing about trifles," says Rosamond's father, who plainly does not consider his child in the light of a beneficent genius; while, when she reaches her teens, she is described as being "just at that age when girls do not join in conversation, but when they sit

modestly silent, and have leisure, if they have sense, to judge of what others say, and to form by choice, and not by chance, their opinions of what goes on in that great world into which they have not yet entered."

And is it really only ninety years since this delicious sentence was penned in sober earnest, as representing an existing state of things! There is an antique, musty, long-secluded flavor about it, that would suggest a monograph copied from an Egyptian tomb with thirty centuries of dust upon its hoary head. Yet Rosamond, sitting "modestly silent" under the delusion that grown-up people are worth listening to, can talk fluently enough when occasion demands it, though at all times her strength lies rather in her heart than in her head. She represents that tranquil, unquestioning, unselfish family love, which Miss Edgeworth could describe so well because she felt it so sincerely. The girl who had three stepmothers and nineteen brothers and sisters, and managed to be fond of them all, should be good authority on the subject of domestic affections; and that warm, happy, loving atmosphere which charms us in her stories, and

which brought tears to Sir Walter Scott's eyes when he laid down Simple Susan, is only the reflection of the cheerful home life she steadfastly helped to brighten.

Her restrictions as a writer are perhaps most felt by those who admire her most. Her pet virtue — after prudence — is honesty ; and yet how poor a sentiment it becomes under her treatment ! — no virtue at all, in fact, but merely a policy working for its own gain. Take the long conversation between the little Italian merchants on the respective merits of integrity and sharpness in their childish traffic. Each disputant exhausts his wits in trying to prove the superior wisdom of his own course, but not once does the virtuous Francisco make use of the only argument which is of any real value, — I do not cheat because it is not right. There is more to be learned about honesty, real unselfish, unrequited honesty, in Charles Lamb's little sketch of Barbara S—— than in all Miss Edgeworth has written on the subject in a dozen different tales.

"Taking up one's cross does not at all mean having ovations at dinner parties, and being put over everybody else's head," says Ruskin,

with visible impatience at the smooth and easy manner in which Miss Edgeworth persists in grinding the mills of the gods, and distributing poetical justice to each and every comer. It may be very nice to see the generous Laura, who gave away her half sovereign, extolled to the skies by a whole room full of company, "disturbed for the purpose," while "poor dear little Rosamond" — he too has a weakness for this small blunderer — is left in the lurch, without either shoes or jar; but it is not real generosity that needs so much commendation, and it is not real life that can be depended on for giving it. Yet Ruskin admits that Harry and Lucy were his earliest friends, to the extent even of inspiring him with an ambitious desire to continue their history; and he cannot say too much in praise of an authoress "whose every page is so full and so delightful. I can read her over and over again, without ever tiring. No one brings you into the company of pleasanter or wiser people; no one tells you more truly how to do right." [1]

He might have added that no one ever was more moderate in her exactions. The little

[1] *Ethics of the Dust.*

people who brighten Miss Edgeworth's pages are not expected, like the children in more recent books, to take upon their shoulders a load of grown-up duties and responsibilities. Life is simplified for them by an old-fashioned habit of trusting in the wisdom of their parents; and these parents, instead of being foolish and wrong-headed, so as to set off more strikingly the child's sagacious energy, are apt to be very sensible and kind, and remarkably well able to take care of themselves and their families. This is the more refreshing because, after reading a few modern stories, either English or American, one is troubled with serious doubts as to the moral usefulness of adults; and we begin to feel that as we approach the age of Mentor it behooves us to find some wise young Telemachus who will consent to be our protector and our guide. There is no more charming writer for the young than Flora Shaw; yet Hector and Phyllis Browne, and even that group of merry Irish children in Castle Blair, are all convinced it is their duty to do some difficult or dangerous work in the interests of humanity, and all are afflicted with a premature consciousness of social evils.

> " The time is out of joint; oh, cursed spite!
> That ever I was born to set it right! "

cries Hamlet wearily; but it is at thirty, and not at thirteen, that he makes this unpleasant discovery.

In religious stories, of which there are many hundreds published every year, these peculiar views are even more defined, presenting themselves often in the form of a spiritual contest between highly endowed, sensitive children and their narrow-minded parents and guardians, who, of course, are always in the wrong. The clever authoress of Thrown Together is by no means innocent of this unwholesome tone; but the chief offender, and one who has had a host of dismal imitators, is Susan Warner, — Miss Wetherell, — who plainly considered that virtue, especially in the young, was of no avail unless constantly undergoing persecution. Her supernaturally righteous little girls, who pin notes on their fathers' dressing-tables, requesting them to become Christians, and who endure the most brutal treatment — at their parents' hands — rather than sing songs on Sunday evening, are equaled only by her older heroines, who divide their time im-

partially between flirting and praying, between indiscriminate kisses and passionate searching for light. A Blackwood critic declares that there is more kissing done in The Old Helmet than in all of Sir Walter Scott's novels put together, and utters an energetic protest against the penetrating glances, and earnest pressing of hands, and brotherly embraces, and the whole vulgar paraphernalia of pious flirtation, so immeasurably hurtful to the undisciplined fancy of the young. "They have good reason to expect," he growls, "from these pictures of life, that if they are very good, and very pious, and very busy in doing grown-up work, when they reach the mature age of sixteen or so, some young gentleman who has been in love with them all along will declare himself at the very nick of time; and they may then look to find themselves, all the struggles of life over, reposing a weary head on his stalwart shoulder. . . . Mothers, never in great favor with novelists, are sinking deeper and deeper in their black books, — there is a positive jealousy of their influence; while the father in the religious tale, as opposed to the moral or sentimental, is commonly either a

scamp or nowhere. The heroine has, so to say, to do her work single-handed."

In some of these stories, moreover, the end justifies the means to an alarming extent. Girls who steal money from their relatives in order to go as missionaries among the Indians, and young women who pretend to sit up with the sick that they may slip off unattended to hear some inspired preacher in a barn, are not safe companions even in books; while, if no grave indiscretion be committed, the lesson of self-righteousness is taught on every page. Not very long ago I had the pleasure of reading a tale in which the youthful heroine considers it her mission in life to convert her grandparents; and while there is nothing to prevent an honest girl from desiring such a thing, the idea is not a happy one for a narrative, in view of certain homely old adages irresistibly associated with the notion. "Girls," wrote Hannah More, "should be led to distrust their own judgment;" but if they have the conversion of their grandparents on their hands, how can they afford to be distrustful? Hannah More is unquestionably out of date, and so, we fear, is that English humorist who

said, "If all the grown-up people in the world should suddenly fail, what a frightful thing would society become, reconstructed by boys!" Evidently he had in mind a land given over to toffy and foot-ball, but he was strangely mistaken in his notions. Perhaps the carnal little hero of Vice Versâ might have managed matters in this disgraceful fashion; but with Flora Shaw's earnest children at the helm, society would be reconstructed on a more serious basis than it is already, and Heaven knows this is not a change of which we stand in need. In fact, if the young people who live and breathe around us are one third as capable, as strenuous, as clear-sighted, as independent, as patronizing, and as undeniably our superiors as their modern counterparts in literature, who can doubt that the eternal cause of progress would be furthered by the change? And is it, after all, mere pique which inclines us to Miss Edgeworth's ordinary little boys and girls, who, standing half dazed on the threshold of life, stretch out their hands with childish confidence for help?

THE DECAY OF SENTIMENT.

THAT useful little phrase, "the complexity of modern thought," has been so hard worked of late years that it seems like a refinement of cruelty to add to its obligations. Begotten by the philosophers, born of the essayists, and put out to nurse among the novel-writers, it has since been apprenticed to the whole body of scribblers, and drudges away at every trade in literature. How, asks Vernon Lee, can we expect our fiction to be amusing, when a psychological and sympathetic interest has driven away the old hard-hearted spirit of comedy? How, asks Mr. Pater, can Sebastian Van Stork make up his mind to love and marry and work like ordinary mortals, when the many-sidedness of life has wrought in him a perplexed envy of those quiet occupants of the churchyard, "whose deceasing was so long since over"? How, asks George Eliot, can Mrs. Pullet weep with uncontrolled emotion over Mrs. Sutton's dropsy, when it behooves her

not to crush her sleeves or stain her bonnet-strings? The problem is repeated everywhere, either in mockery or deadly earnestness, according to the questioner's disposition, and the old springs of simple sentiment are drying fast within us. It is heartless to laugh, it is foolish to cry, it is indiscreet to love, it is morbid to hate, and it is intolerant to espouse any cause with enthusiasm.

There was a time, and not so many years ago, when men and women found no great difficulty in making up their minds on ordinary matters, and their opinions, if erroneous, were at least succinct and definite. Nero was then a cruel tyrant, the Duke of Wellington a great soldier, Sir Walter Scott the first of novelists, and the French Revolution a villainous piece of business. Now we are equally enlightened and confused by the keen researches and shifting verdicts with which historians and critics seek to dispel this comfortable frame of darkness. Nero, perhaps, had the good of his subjects secretly at heart when he expressed that benevolent desire to dispatch them all at a blow, and Robespierre was but a practical philanthropist, carried, it may be, a

little too far by the stimulating influences of the hour. "We have palliations of Tiberius, eulogies of Henry VIII., and devotional exercises to Cromwell," observes Mr. Bagehot, in some perplexity as to where this state of things may find an ending; and he confesses that in the mean time his own original notions of right and wrong are growing sadly hazy and uncertain. Moreover, in proportion as the heavy villains of history assume a chastened and ascetic appearance, its heroes dwindle perceptibly into the commonplace, and its heroines are stripped of every alluring grace; while as for the living men who are controlling the destinies of nations, not even Macaulay's ever useful schoolboy is too small and ignorant to refuse them homage. Yet we read of Scott, in the zenith of his fame, standing silent and abashed before the Duke of Wellington, unable, and perhaps unwilling, to shake off the awe that paralyzed his tongue. "The Duke possesses every one mighty quality of the mind in a higher degree than any other man either does or has ever done!" exclaimed Sir Walter to John Ballantyne, who, not being framed for hero-worship, failed to appreciate

his friend's extraordinary enthusiasm. While we smile at the sentiment, — knowing, of course, so much better ourselves, — we feel an envious admiration of the happy man who uttered it.

There is a curious little incident which Mrs. Lockhart used to relate, in after years, as a proof of her father's emotional temperament, and of the reverence with which he regarded all that savored of past or present greatness. When the long-concealed Scottish regalia were finally brought to light, and exhibited to the public of Edinburgh, Scott, who had previously been one of the committee chosen to unlock the chest, took his daughter to see the royal jewels. She was then a girl of fifteen, and her nerves had been so wrought upon by all that she had heard on the subject that, when the lid was opened, she felt herself growing faint, and withdrew a little from the crowd. A light-minded young commissioner, to whom the occasion suggested no solemnity, took up the crown, and made a gesture as if to place it on the head of a lady standing near, when Sophia Scott heard her father exclaim passionately, in a voice "something between anger

and despair." "By G—, no!" The gentleman, much embarrassed, immediately replaced the diadem, and Sir Walter, turning aside, saw his daughter, deadly pale, leaning against the door, and led her at once into the open air. "He never spoke all the way home," she added, "but every now and then I felt his arm tremble; and from that time I fancied he began to treat me more like a woman than a child. I thought he liked me better, too, than he had ever done before."

The whole scene, as we look back upon it now, is a quaint illustration of how far a man's emotions could carry him, when they were nourished alike by the peculiarities of his genius and of his education. The feeling was doubtless an exaggerated one, but it was at least nobler than the speculative humor with which a careless crowd now calculates the market value of the crown jewels in the Tower of London. "What they would bring" was a thought which we may be sure never entered Sir Walter's head, as he gazed with sparkling eyes on the modest regalia of Scotland, and conjured up every stirring drama in which they had played their part. For him

each page of his country's history was the subject of close and loving scrutiny. All those Davids, and Williams, and Malcolms, about whom we have an indistinct notion that they spent their lives in being bullied by their neighbors and badgered by their subjects, were to his mind as kingly as Charlemagne on his Throne of the West; and their crimes and struggles and brief glorious victories were part of the ineffaceable knowledge of his boyhood. To *feel* history in this way, to come so close to the world's actors that our pulses rise and fall with their vicissitudes, is a better thing, after all, than the most accurate and reasonable of doubts. I knew two little English girls who always wore black frocks on the 30th of January, in honor of the "Royal Martyr," and tied up their hair with black ribbons, and tried hard to preserve the decent gravity of demeanor befitting such a doleful anniversary. The same little girls, it must be confessed, carried Holmby House to bed with them, and bedewed their pillows with many tears over the heart-rending descriptions thereof. What to them were the "outraged liberties of England," which Mr. Gosse

rather vaguely tells us tore King Charles to pieces? They saw him standing on the scaffold, a sad and princely figure, and they heard the frightened sobs that rent the air when the cruel deed was done. It is not possible for us now to take this picturesque and exclusive view of one whose shortcomings have been so vigorously raked to light by indignant disciples of Carlyle; but the child who has ever cried over any great historic tragedy is richer for the experience, and stands on higher ground than one whose life is bounded by the schoolroom walls, or who finds her needful stimulant in the follies of a precocious flirtation. What a charming picture we have of Eugénie de Guérin feeding her passionate little soul with vain regrets for the unfortunate family of Louis XVI. and with sweet infantile plans for their rescue. "Even as a child," she writes in her journal, "I venerated this martyr, I loved this victim whom I heard so much talked of in my family as the 21st of January drew near. We used to be taken to the funeral service in the church, and I gazed at the high catafalque, the melancholy throne of the good king. My astonishment

impressed me with sorrow and indignation. I came away weeping over this death, and hating the wicked men who had brought it about. How many hours have I spent devising means for saving Louis, the queen, and the whole hapless family, — if I only had lived in their day. But after much calculating and contriving, no promising measure presented itself, and I was forced, very reluctantly, to leave the prisoners where they were. My compassion was more especially excited for the beautiful little Dauphin, the poor child pent up between walls, and unable to play in freedom. I used to carry him off in fancy, and keep him safely hidden at Cayla, and Heaven only knows the delight of running about our fields with a prince."

Here at least we see the imaginative faculty playing a vigorous and wholesome part in a child's mental training. The little solitary French girl who filled up her lonely hours with such pretty musings as these, could scarcely fail to attain that rare distinction of mind which all true critics have been so prompt to recognize and love. It was with her the natural outgrowth of an intelligence,

quickened by sympathy and fed with delicate emotions. The Dauphin in the Temple, the Princes in the Tower, Marie Antoinette on the guillotine, and Jeanne d'Arc at the stake, these are the scenes which have burned their way into many a youthful heart, and the force of such early impressions can never be utterly destroyed. A recent essayist, deeply imbued with this good principle, has assured us that the little maiden who, ninety years ago, surprised her mother in tears, "because the wicked people had cut off the French queen's head," received from that impression the very highest kind of education. But this is object-teaching carried to its extremest limit, and even in these days, when training is recognized to be of such vital importance, one feels that the death of a queen is a high price to pay for a little girl's instruction. It might perhaps suffice to let her live more freely in the past, and cultivate her emotions after a less costly and realistic fashion.

On the other hand, Mr. Edgar Saltus, who is nothing if not melancholy, would fain persuade us that the "gift of tears," which Swinburne prized so highly and Mrs. Browning

cultivated with such transparent care, finds its supreme expression in man, only because of man's greater capacity for suffering. Yet if it be true that the burden of life grows heavier for each succeeding generation, it is no less apparent that we have taught ourselves to stare dry-eyed at its blankness. An old rabbinical legend says that in Paradise God gave the earth to Adam and tears to Eve, and it is a cheerless doctrine which tells us now that both gifts are equal because both are valueless, that the world will never be any merrier, and that we are all tired of waxing sentimental over its lights and shadows. But our great-grandfathers, who were assuredly not a tender-hearted race, and who never troubled their heads about those modern institutions, wickedly styled by Mr. Lang "Societies for Badgering the Poor," cried right heartily over poems, and novels, and pictures, and plays, and scenery, and everything, in short, that their great-grandsons would not now consider as worthy of emotion. Jeffrey the terrible shed tears over the long-drawn pathos of little Nell, and has been roundly abused by critics ever since for the extremely bad

taste he exhibited. Macaulay, who was seldom disposed to be sentimental, confesses that he wept over Florence Dombey. Lord Byron was strongly moved when Scott recited to him his favorite ballad of Hardyknute; and Sir Walter himself paid the tribute of his tears to Mrs. Opie's dismal stories, and Southey's no less dismal Pilgrimage to Waterloo. When Marmion was first published, Joanna Baillie undertook to read it aloud to a little circle of literary friends, and on reaching those lines which have reference to her own poems,

> "When she the bold enchantress came,
> With fearless hand, and heart in flame,"

the "uncontrollable emotion" of her hearers forced the fair reader to break down. In a modern drawing-room this uncontrollable emotion would probably find expression in such gentle murmurs of congratulation as "Very pretty and appropriate, I am sure," or "How awfully nice in Sir Walter to have put it in that way!"

Turn where we will, however, amid the pages of the past, we see this precious gift of tears poured out in what seems to us now a

spirit of wanton profusion. Sterne, by his own showing, must have gone through life like the Walrus, in Through the Looking Glass,

> "Holding his pocket handkerchief
> Before his streaming eyes;"

and we can detect him every now and then peeping slyly out of the folds, to see what sort of an impression he was making. "I am as weak as a woman," he sighs, with conscious satisfaction, "and I beg the world not to smile, but pity me." Burns, who at least never cried for effect, was moved to sudden tears by a pathetic print of a dead soldier, that hung on Professor Fergusson's wall. Scott was always visibly affected by the wild northern scenery that he loved; and Erskine was discovered in the Cave of Staffa, "weeping like a woman," though, in truth, a gloomy, dangerous, slippery, watery cavern is the last place on earth where a woman would ordinarily stop to be emotional. She might perhaps cry with Sterne over a dead monk or a dead donkey, — he has an equal allowance of tears for both, — but once inside of a cave, her real desire is to get out again as quickly as possible, with dry skirts and an unbroken neck.

It may be, however, that our degenerate modern impulses afford us no safe clue to those halcyon days when sentiment was paramount and practical considerations of little weight; when wet feet and sore throats were not suffered to intrude their rueful warnings upon the majesty of nature; when ladies, who lived comfortably and happily with the husbands of their choice, poured forth impassioned prayers, in the Annual Register, for the boon of indifference, and poets like Cowper rushed forward to remonstrate with them for their cruelty.

> "Let no low thought suggest the prayer,
> Oh! grant, kind Heaven, to me,
> Long as I draw ethereal air,
> Sweet sensibility."

wrote the author of The Task, in sober earnestness and sincerity.

> "Then oh! ye Fair, if Pity's ray
> E'er taught your snowy breasts to sigh,
> Shed o'er my contemplative lay
> The tears of sensibility,"

wrote Macaulay as a burlesque on the prevailing spirit of bathos, and was, I think, unreasonably angry because a number of readers, his own mother included, failed to see that he

was in fun. Yet all his life this mocking critic cherished in his secret soul of souls a real affection for those hysterical old romances which had been the delight of his boyhood, and which were even then rapidly disappearing before the cold scorn of an enlightened world. Miss Austen, in Sense and Sensibility, had impaled emotionalism on the fine shafts of her delicate satire, and Macaulay was Miss Austen's sworn champion; but nevertheless he contrived to read and reread Mrs. Meek's and Mrs. Cuthbertson's marvelous stories, until he probably knew them better than he did Emma or Northanger Abbey. When an old edition of Santa Sebastiano was sold at auction in India, he secured it at a fabulous price,— Miss Eden bidding vigorously against him, — and he occupied his leisure moments in making a careful calculation of the number of fainting-fits that occur in the course of the five volumes. There are twenty-seven in all, so he has recorded, of which the heroine alone comes in for eleven, while seven others are distributed among the male characters. Mr. Trevelyan has kindly preserved for us the description of a single catastrophe, and we can no longer

wonder at anybody's partiality for the tale, when we learn that "one of the sweetest smiles that ever animated the face of mortal man now diffused itself over the countenance of Lord St. Orville, as he fell at the feet of Julia in a death-like swoon." Mr. Howells would doubtless tell us that this is not a true and accurate delineation of real life, and that what Lord St. Orville should have done was to have simply wiped the perspiration off his forehead, after the unvarnished fashion of Mr. Mavering, in April Hopes. But Macaulay, who could mop his own brow whenever he felt so disposed, and who recognized his utter inability to faint with a sweet smile at a lady's feet, naturally delighted in Mrs. Cuthbertson's singularly accomplished hero. Swooning is now, I fear, sadly out of date. In society we no longer look upon it as a pleasing evidence of feminine propriety, and in the modern novel nothing sufficiently exciting to bring about such a result is ever permitted to happen. But in the good old impossible stories of the past it formed a very important element, and some of Mrs. Radcliffe's heroines can easily achieve twenty-seven faint-

ing-fits by their own unaided industry. They faint at the most inopportune times and under the most exasperating circumstances: when they are running away from banditti, or hiding from cruel relatives, or shut up by themselves in gloomy dungeons, with nobody to look after and resuscitate them. Their trembling limbs are always refusing to support them just when a little activity is really necessary for safety, and, though they live in an atmosphere of horrors, the smallest shock is more than they can endure with equanimity. In the Sicilian Romance, Julia's brother, desiring to speak to her for a minute, knocks gently at her door, whereupon, with the most unexpected promptness, "she shrieked and fainted;" and as the key happens to be turned on the inside, he is obliged to wait in the hall until she slowly regains her consciousness.

Nothing, however, can mar the decorous sentimentality which these young people exhibit in all their loves and sorrows. Emily the forlorn "touched the chords of her lute in solemn symphony," when the unenviable nature of her surroundings might reasonably have banished all music from her soul; Theodore paused to

bathe Adeline's hand with his tears, in a moment of painful uncertainty; and Hippolitus, who would have scorned to be stabbed like an ordinary mortal, "received a sword through his body," — precisely as though it were a present, — "and, uttering a deep sigh, fell to the ground," on which, true to her principles, "Julia shrieked and fainted." We read of the Empress Octavia swooning when Virgil recited to her his description of the death of Marcellus; and we know that Shelley fainted when he heard Cristabel read; but Mrs. Radcliffe's heroines, though equally sensitive, are kept too busy with their own disasters to show this sympathetic interest in literature. Their adventures strike us now as being, on the whole, more amusing than thrilling; but we should remember that they were no laughing matter to the readers of fifty years ago. People did not then object to the interminable length of a story, and they followed its intricate windings and counter-windings with a trembling zest which we can only envy. One of the earliest recollections of my own childhood is a little book depicting the awful results of Mrs. Radcliffe's terror-inspiring romances upon the

youthful mind; a well-intentioned work, no doubt, but which inevitably filled us with a sincere desire to taste for ourselves of these pernicious horrors. If I found them far less frightful than I had hoped, the loss was mine, and the fault lay in the matter-of-fact atmosphere of the modern nursery; for does not the author of the now forgotten Pursuits of Literature tell us that the Mysteries of Udolpho is the work of an intellectual giant? — "a mighty magician, bred and nourished by the Florentine muses in their sacred solitary caverns, amid the pale shrines of Gothic superstition, and in all the dreariness of enchantment."

That was the way that critics used to write, and nobody dreamed of laughing at them. When Letitia Elizabeth Landon poured forth her soul in the most melancholy of verses, all London stopped to listen and to pity.

> "There is no truth in love, whate'er its seeming,
> And Heaven itself could scarcely seem more true.
> Sadly have I awakened from the dreaming
> Whose charmed slumber, false one, was of you,"

wrote this healthy and heart-whole young woman; and Lord Lytton has left us an amusing

account of the sensation that such poems excited. He and his fellow-students exhausted their ingenuity in romantic speculations concerning the unknown singer, and inscribed whole reams of fervid but indifferent stanzas to her honor. "There was always," he says, "in the reading-room of the Union, a rush every Saturday afternoon for the Literary Gazette, and an impatient anxiety to hasten at once to that corner of the sheet which contained the three magical letters L. E. L. All of us praised the verse, and all of us guessed the author. We soon learned that it was a female, and our admiration was doubled, and our conjectures tripled." When Francesca Carrara appeared, it was received with an enthusiasm never manifested for Pride and Prejudice, or Persuasion, and romantic young men and women reveled in its impassioned melancholy. What a pattering of tear-drops on every page! The lovely heroine — less mindful of her clothes than Mrs. Pullet — looks down and marks how the great drops have fallen like rain upon her bosom. "Alas!" she sighs, "I have cause to weep. I must weep over my own changefulness, and over the

sweetest illusions of my youth. I feel suddenly grown old. Never more will the flowers seem so lovely, or the stars so bright. Never more shall I dwell on Erminia's deep and enduring love for the unhappy Tancred, and think that I too could so have loved. Ah! in what now can I believe, when I may not even trust my own heart?" Here, at least, we have unadulterated sentiment, with no traces in it of that "mean and jocular life" which Emerson so deeply scorned, and for which the light-minded readers of to-day have ventured to express their cheerful and shameless preference.

Emotional literature, reflecting as it does the tastes and habits of a dead past, should not stand trial alone before the cold eyes of the mocking present, where there is no sympathy for its weakness and no clue to its identity. A happy commonplaceness is now acknowledged to be, next to brevity of life, man's best inheritance; but in the days when all the virtues and vices flaunted in gala costume, people were hardly prepared for that fine simplicity which has grown to be the crucial test of art. Love, friendship, honor, and courage were as real then as now, but they asserted themselves

in fantastic ways, and with an ostentation that we are apt to mistake for insincerity. When Mrs. Katharine Philips founded her famous Society of Friendship, in the middle of the seventeenth century, she was working earnestly enough for her particular conception of sweetness and light. It is hard not to laugh at these men and women of the world addressing each other solemnly as the "noble Silvander" and the "dazzling Polycrete;" and it is harder still to believe that the fervent devotion of their verses represented in any degree the real sentiments of their hearts. But Orinda, whose indefatigable exertions held the society together, meant every word she said, and credited the rest with similar veracity.

> "Lucasia, whose harmonious state
> The Spheres and Muses only imitate,"

is for her but a temperate expression of regard; and we find her writing to Mrs. Annie Owens — a most unresponsive young Welshwoman — in language that would be deemed extravagant in a lover: —

> "I did not live until this time
> Crowned my felicity,
> When I could say without a crime,
> I am not thine, but thee."

One wonders what portion of her heart the amiable Mr. Philips was content to occupy.

Frenchwomen of the seventeenth and eighteenth centuries found their principal amusement in contracting, either with each other or with men, those highly sentimental friendships which were presumably free from all dross of earthly passion, and which rested on a shadowy basis of pure intellectual affinity. Mademoiselle de Scudéry delighted in portraying this rarefied intercourse between congenial souls, and the billing and cooing of Platonic turtle-doves fill many pages of her ponderous romances. Sappho and Phaon, in the Grand Cyrus, "told each other every particular of their lives," which must have been a little tedious at times and altogether unnecessary, inasmuch as we are assured that "the exchange of their thoughts was so sincere that all those in Sappho's mind passed into Phaon's, and all those in Phaon's came into Sappho's." Conversation under these circumstances would be apt to lose its zest for ordinary mortals, who value the power of speech rather as a disguise than as an interpretation of their real convictions; but it was not so

with this guileless pair. "They understood each other without words, and saw their whole hearts in each other's eyes."

As for the great wave of emotionalism that followed in Rousseau's train, it was a pure make-believe, like every other sentiment that bubbled on the seething surface of French society. Avarice and honor alone were real. To live like a profligate and to die like a hero were the two accomplishments common to every grand seigneur in the country. For the rest, there was a series of fads, — simplicity, benevolence, philosophy, passion, asceticism; Voltaire one day, Rousseau the next; Arcadian virtues and court vices jumbled fantastically together; the cause of the people on every tongue, and the partridges hatching in the peasant's corn; Marie Antoinette milking a cow, and the infant Madame Royale with eighty nurses and attendants; great ladies, with jewels in their hair, on their bosoms, and on their silken slippers, laboriously earning a few francs by picking out gold threads from scraps of tarnished bullion; everybody anxiously asking everybody else, "What shall we do to be amused?" and the real answer to all

uttered long before by Louis XIII., "Venez, monsieur, allons-nous ennuyer ensemble." Day and night are not more different than this sickly hothouse pressure and the pure emotion that fired Scott's northern blood, as he looked on the dark rain-swept hills till his eyes grew bright with tears. "We sometimes weep to avoid the disgrace of not weeping," says Rochefoucauld, who valued at its worth the facile sentimentality of his countrymen. Could he have lived to witness M. de Latour's hysterical transports on finding Rousseau's signature and a crushed periwinkle in an old copy of the Imitatio, the great moralist might see that his bitter truths have in them a pitiless continuity of adjustment, and fit themselves afresh to every age. What excitation of feeling accompanied the bloody work of the French Revolutionists! What purity of purpose! What nobility of language! What grandeur of device! What bottled moonshine everywhere! The wicked old world was to be born anew, reason was to triumph over passion; and self-interest, which had ruled men for six thousand years, was to be suddenly eradicated from their hearts. When

the patriots had finished cutting off everybody else's head, then the reign of mutual tenderness would begin; the week — inestimable privilege! — would hold ten days instead of seven; and Frimaire and Floréal and Messidor would prove to the listening earth that the very names of past months had sunk into merited oblivion. Father Faber says that a sense of humor is a great help in the spiritual life; it is an absolute necessity in the temporal. Had the Convention possessed even the faintest perception of the ridiculous, this friendly instinct would have lowered their sublime heads from the stars, stung them into practical issues, and moderated the absurd delusions of the hour.

At present, however, the new disciples of "earnestness" are trying hard to persuade us that we are too humorous, and that it is the spirit of universal mockery which stifles all our nobler and finer emotions. We would like to believe them, but unhappily it is only to exceedingly strenuous souls that this lawless fun seems to manifest itself. The rest of us, searching cheerfully enough, fail to discover its traces. If we are seldom capable of any

sustained enthusiasm, it is rather because we yawn than because we laugh. Unlike Emerson, we are glad to be amused, only the task of amusing us grows harder day by day; and Justin McCarthy's languid heroine, who declines to get up in the morning because she has so often been up before, is but an exhaustive instance of the inconveniences of modern satiety. When we read of the Oxford students beleaguering the bookshops in excited crowds for the first copies of Rokeby and Childe Harold, fighting over the precious volumes, and betting recklessly on their rival sales, we wonder whether either Lord Tennyson's or Mr. Browning's latest effusions created any such tumult among the undergraduates of to-day, or wiled away their money from more legitimate subjects of speculation. Lord Holland, when asked by Murray for his opinion of Old Mortality, answered indignantly, "Opinion! We did not one of us go to bed last night! Nothing slept but my gout." Yet Rokeby and Childe Harold are both in sad disgrace with modern critics, and Old Mortality stands gathering dust upon our bookshelves. Mr. Howells, who ought to

know, tells us that fiction has become a finer art in our day than it was in the days of our fathers, and that the methods and interests we have outgrown can never hope to be revived. So if the masterpieces of the present, the triumphs of learned verse and realistic prose, fail to lift their readers out of themselves, like the masterpieces of the past, the fault must be our own. We devote some conscientious hours to Parleyings with Certain People of Importance, and we are well pleased, on the whole, to find ourselves in such good company; but it is a pleasure rich in the temperance that Hamlet loved, and altogether unlikely to ruffle our composure. We read The Bostonians and The Rise of Silas Lapham with a due appreciation of their minute perfections; but we go to bed quite cheerfully at our usual hour, and are content to wait an interval of leisure to resume them. Could Daisy Miller charm a gouty leg, or Lemuel Barker keep us sleepless until morning? When St. Pierre finished the manuscript of Paul and Virginia, he consented to read it to the painter, Joseph Vernet. At first the solitary listener was loud in his approbation, then more subdued,

then silent altogether. "Soon he ceased to praise; he only wept." Yet Paul and Virginia has been pronounced morbid, strained, unreal, unworthy even of the tears that childhood drops upon its pages. But would Mr. Millais or Sir Frederick Leighton sit weeping over the delightful manuscripts of Henry Shorthouse or Mr. Louis Stevenson? Did the last flicker of genuine emotional enthusiasm die out with George Borrow, who lived at least a century too late for his own convenience? When a respectable, gray-haired, middle-aged Englishman takes an innocent delight in standing bare-headed in the rain, reciting execrable Welsh verses on every spot where a Welsh bard might, but probably does not, lie buried, it is small wonder that the "coarse-hearted, sensual, selfish Saxon" — we quote the writer's own words — should find the spectacle more amusing than sublime. But then what supreme satisfaction Mr. Borrow derived from his own rhapsodies, what conscious superiority over the careless crowd who found life all too short to study the beauties of Iolo Goch or Gwilym ab Ieuan! There is nothing in the world so enjoyable as

a thorough-going monomania, especially if it be of that peculiar literary order which insures a broad field and few competitors. In a passionate devotion to Welsh epics or to Provençal pastorals, to Roman antiquities or to Gypsy genealogy, to the most confused epochs of Egyptian history or the most private correspondence of a dead author, — in one or other of these favorite specialties our modern students choose to put forth their powers, and display an astonishing industry and zeal.

There is a story told of a far too cultivated young man, who, after professing a great love for music, was asked if he enjoyed the opera. He did not. Oratorios were then more to his taste. He did not care for them at all. Ballads perhaps pleased him by their simplicity. He took no interest in them whatever. Church music alone was left. He had no partiality for even that. "What is it you *do* like?" asked his questioner, with despairing persistency; and the answer was vouchsafed her in a single syllable, "Fugues." This exclusiveness of spirit may be detrimental to that broad catholicity on which great minds are nourished, but it has rare charms for its

possessor, and, being within the reach of all, grows daily in our favor. French poets, like Gautier and Sully Prudhomme, have been content to strike all their lives upon a single resonant note, and men of far inferior genius have produced less perfect work in the same willfully restricted vein. The pressure of the outside world sorely chafes these unresponsive natures; large issues paralyze their pens. They turn by instinct from the coarseness, the ugliness, the realness of life, and sing of it with graceful sadness and with delicate laughter, as if the whole thing were a pathetic or a fantastic dream. They are dumb before its riddles and silent in its uproar, standing apart from the tumult, and letting the impetuous crowd — "mostly fools," as Carlyle said — sweep by them unperceived. Herrick is their prototype, the poet who polished off his little glittering verses about Julia's silks and Dianeme's ear-rings when all England was dark with civil war. But even this armed neutrality, this genuine and admirable indifference, cannot always save us from the rough knocks of a burly and aggressive world. The revolution, which he ignored, drove Herrick from

his peaceful vicarage into the poverty and gloom of London; the siege of Paris played sad havoc with Gautier's artistic tranquillity, and devoured the greater part of his modest fortune. We are tethered to our kind, and may as well join hands in the struggle. Vexation is no heavier than *ennui*, and "he who lives without folly," says Rochefoucauld, "is hardly so wise as he thinks."

CURIOSITIES OF CRITICISM.

THERE is a growing tendency on the part of literary men to resent what they are pleased to consider the unwarrantable interference of the critic. His ministrations have probably never been sincerely gratifying to their recipients; Marsyas could hardly have enjoyed being flayed by Apollo, even though he knew his music was bad; and worse, far worse, than the most caustic severity are the few careless words that dismiss our cherished aspirations as not even worthy the rueful dignity of punishment. But in former days the victim, if he resented such treatment at all, resented it in the spirit of Lord Byron, who, roused to a healthy and vigorous wrath,

> "expressed his royal views
> In language such as gentlemen are seldom known to use,"

and by a comprehensive and impartial attack on all the writers of his time proved himself both able and willing to handle the weapons

that had wounded him. On the other side, those authors whose defensive powers were of a less prompt and efficient character ventured no nearer to a quarrel than — to borrow a simile of George Eliot's — a water-fowl that puts out its leg in a deprecating manner can be said to quarrel with a boy who throws stones. Southey, who of all men entertained the most comfortable opinion of his own merits, must have been deeply angered by the treatment Thalaba and Madoc received from the Edinburgh Review ; yet we cannot see that either he or his admirers looked upon Jeffrey in any other light than that of a tyrannical but perfectly legitimate authority. Far nobler victims suffered from the same bitter sting, and they too nursed their wounds in a decorous silence.

But it is very different to-day, when every injured aspirant to the Temple of Fame assures himself and a sympathizing public, not that a particular critic is mistaken in his particular case, which we may safely take for granted, but that all critics are necessarily wrong in all cases, through an abnormal development of what the catechism terms "dark-

ness of the understanding and a propensity to evil." This amiable theory was, I think, first advanced by Lord Beaconsfield, who sorely needed some such emollient for his bruises. In Lothair, when that truly remarkable artist Mr. Gaston Phœbus, accompanied by his sister-in-law Miss Euphrosyne Cantacuzene, — Heaven help their unhappy sponsors! — reveals to his assembled guests the picture he has just completed, we are told that his air "was elate, and was redeemed from arrogance only by the intellect of his brow. 'To-morrow,' he said, 'the critics will commence. You know who the critics are? The men who have failed in literature and art.'" If Lord Beaconsfield thought to disarm his foes by this ingenious device, he was most signally mistaken; for while several of the reviews were deferentially hinting that perhaps the book might not be so very bad as it seemed, Blackwood stepped alertly to the front, and in a criticism unsurpassed for caustic wit and merciless raillery held up each feeble extravagance to the inextinguishable laughter of the world. Even now, when few people venture upon the palatial dreariness of the novel itself, there is

no better way of insuring a mirthful hour than by re-reading this vigorous and trenchant satire.

Quite recently two writers, one on either side of the Atlantic, have echoed with superfluous bitterness their conviction of the total depravity of the critic. Mr. Edgar Fawcett, in The House on High Bridge, and Mr. J. R. Rees, in The Pleasures of a Book-Worm, seem to find the English language painfully inadequate for the forcible expression of their displeasure. Mr. Fawcett considers all critics "inconsistent when they are not regrettably ignorant," and fails to see any use for them in an enlightened world. "It is marvelous," he reflects, "how long we tolerate an absurdity of injustice before suddenly waking up to it. And what can be a more clear absurdity than that some one individual caprice, animus, or even honest judgment should be made to influence the public regarding any new book?" Moreover, he has discovered that the men and women who write the reviews are mere "underpaid vendors of opinions," who earn their breakfasts and dinners by saying disagreeable things about authors, "their superiors beyond

expression." But it is only fair to remind Mr. Fawcett that no particular disgrace is involved in earning one's breakfasts and dinners. On the contrary, hunger is a perfectly legitimate and very valuable incentive to industry. "God help the bear, if, having little else to eat, he must not even suck his own paws!" wrote Sir Walter Scott, with good-humored contempt, when Lord Byron accused him of being a mercenary poet; and we probably owe the Vicar of Wakefield, The Library, and Venice Preserved to their authors' natural and unavoidable craving for food. Besides, if the reviewers are underpaid, it is not so much their fault as that of their employers, and their breakfasts and dinners must be proportionately light. When Milton received five pounds for Paradise Lost, he was probably the most underpaid writer in the whole history of literature, yet Mr. Mark Pattison seems to think that this fact redounds to his especial honor.

But there are even worse things to be learned about the critic than that he sells his opinions for food. According to Mr. Fawcett he is distinguished for "real, hysterical, vigi-

lant, unhealthy sensitiveness," and nurses this unpleasant feeling to such a degree that, should an author object to being ill-treated at his hands, the critic is immediately offended into saying something more abominable still. In fact, like an uncompromising mother I once knew, who always punished her children till they looked pleasant, he requires his smarting victims to smile beneath the rod. Happily there is a cure, and a very radical one, too, for this painful state of affairs. Mr. Fawcett proposes that all such offenders should be obliged to buy the work which they dissect, rightly judging that the book notices would grow beautifully less under such stringent treatment. Indeed, were it extended a little further, and all readers obliged to buy the books they read, the publishers, the sellers, and the reviewers might spare the time to take a holiday together.

Mr. Rees is quite as severe and much more ungrateful in his strictures; for, after stating that the misbehavior of the critic is a source of great amusement to the thoughtful student, he proceeds to chastise that misbehavior, as though it had never entertained him at all.

In his opinion, the reviewer, being guided exclusively by a set of obsolete and worthless rules, is necessarily incapable of recognizing genius under any new development: "He usually is as little fitted to deal with the tasks he sets himself as a manikin is to growl about the anatomy of a star, setting forth at the same time his own thoughts as to how it should be formed." Vanity is the mainspring of his actions: "He fears to be thought beneath his author, and so doles out a limited number of praises and an unlimited quantity of slur." Like the Welshman, he strikes in the dark, thus escaping just retribution; and in his stupid ignorance he seeks to "rein in the wingèd steed," from having no conception of its aerial powers.

Now this is a formidable indictment, and some of the charges may be not without foundation; but if, as too often happens, the "wingèd steed" is merely a donkey standing ambitiously on its hind legs, who but the critic can compel it to resume its quadrupedal attitude? If, as Mr. Walter Bagehot warned us some years ago, "reading is about to become a series of collisions against aggra-

vated breakers, of beatings with imaginary surf," who but the critic can steer us safely through the storm? Never, in fact, were his duties more sharply defined or more sorely needed than at present, when the average reader, like the unfortunate Mr. Boffin, stands bewildered by the Scarers in Print, and finds life all too short for their elucidation. The self-satisfied who "know what they prefer," and read accordingly, are like the enthusiasts who follow their own consciences without first accurately ascertaining whither they are being taken. It has been well said that the object of criticism is simply to clear the air about great work for the benefit of ordinary people. We only waste our powers when we refuse a guide, and by forcing our minds hither and thither, like navigators exploring each new stream while ignorant of its course and current, we squander in idle researches the time and thought which should send us steadily forward on our road. Worse still, we vitiate our judgments by perverse and presumptuous conclusions, and weaken our untrained faculties by the very methods we hoped would speed their growth. If Mr. Ruskin and Mr.

Matthew Arnold resemble each other in nothing else, they have both taught earnestly and persistently, through long and useful lives, the supreme necessity of law, the supreme merit of obedience. Mr. Arnold preached it with logical coldness, after his fashion, and Mr. Ruskin with illogical impetuosity, after his; but the lesson remains practically the same. "All freedom is error," writes the author of Queen of the Air, who is at least blessed with the courage of his convictions. "Every line you lay down is either right or wrong: it may be timidly and awkwardly wrong, or fearlessly and impudently wrong; the aspect of the impudent wrongness is pleasurable to vulgar persons, and is what they commonly call 'free' execution. . . . I have hardly patience to hold my pen and go on writing, as I remember the infinite follies of modern thought in this matter, centred in the notion that liberty is good for a man, irrespectively of the use he is likely to make of it."

But he does go on writing, nevertheless, long after this slender stock of patience is exhausted, and in his capacity of critic he lays down Draconian laws which his disciples seem

bound to wear as a heavy yoke around their necks. "Who made Mr. Ruskin a judge or a nursery governess over us?" asks an irreverent contributor to Macmillan; and why, after all, should we abstain from reading Darwin, and Grote, and Coleridge, and Kingsley, and Thackeray, and a host of other writers, who may or may not be gratifying to our own tastes, because Mr. Ruskin has tried and found them wanting? It is not the province of a critic to bar us in a wholesale manner from all authors he does not chance to like, but to aid us, by his practiced judgment, to extract what is good from every field, and to trace, as far as in us lies, those varying degrees of excellence which it is to our advantage to discern. It was in this way that Mr. Arnold, working with conscientious and dispassionate serenity, opened our eyes to new beauty, and strengthened us against vicious influences; he added to our sources of pleasure, he helped us to enjoy them, and not to recognize his kindly aid would be an ungracious form of self-deception. If he were occasionally a little puzzling, as in some parts of Celtic Literature, where the qualities he

detected fall meaningless on our ears, it is a wholesome lesson in humility to acknowledge our bewilderment. Why should the lines

> "What little town by river or sea-shore,
> Or mountain-built with quiet citadel,
> Is emptied of its folk this pious morn?"

be the expression of a purely Greek form of thought, "as Greek as a thing from Homer or Theocritus;" and

> "In such a night
> Stood Dido, with a willow in her hand,
> Upon the wild sea-banks, and waved her love
> To come again to Carthage,"

be as purely Celtic? Why should

> "I know a bank where the wild thyme blows"

be Greek, and

> "Fast-fading violets cover'd up in leaves"

be Celtic? That harmless nondescript, the general reader, be he ever so anxious for enlightenment, is forced to confess he really does not know; and if his ignorance be of the complacent order, he adds an impatient doubt as to whether Mr. Arnold knew either, just as when he "comes up gasping" from a sudden plunge into Browning, he is prompt to declare his firm conviction that the poet never had the faintest idea what he was writing about.

But there is another style of enigma with which critics are wont to harry and perplex us, and one has need of a "complication-proof mind," like Sir George Cornewall Lewis, to see clearly through the tangle. Mr. Churton Collins, in his bitter attack on Mr. Gosse in the Quarterly Review, objected vehemently to ever-varying descriptions of a single theme. He did not think that if Drayton's Barons' Wars be a "serene and lovely poem," it could well have a "passionate music running through it," or possess "irregular force and sudden brilliance of style." Perhaps he was right; but there are few critics who can help us to know and feel a poem like Mr. Gosse, and fewer still who write with such consummate grace and charm. It is only when we pass from one reviewer to another that the shifting lights thrown upon an author dazzle and confuse us. Like the fifty-six different readings of the first line of the Orlando Furioso, there are countless standpoints from which we are invited to inspect each and every subject; and unless we follow the admirable example of Mr. Courthope, who solves a difficulty by gently saying, "The matter is one not for argument,

but for perception," we are lost in the mazes of indecision. Thus Mr. Ruskin demonstrates most beautifully the great superiority of Sir Walter Scott's heroines over his heroes, and by the time we settle our minds to this conviction we find that Mr. Bagehot, that most acute and exhausting of critics, thinks the heroines inferior in every way, and that Sir Walter was truly felicitous only in his male characters.

Happily, this is a point on which we should be able to decide for ourselves without much prompting; but all disputed topics are not equally intelligible. There is the vexed and vexing question of romantic and classical, conservative and liberal poetry, about which Mr. Courthope and Mr. Andrew Lang and Mr. Myers have had so much to say of late, and which is, at best, but a dimly lighted path for the uninitiated to travel. There is that perpetual problem, Mr. Walt Whitman, the despair and the stumbling-block of critics, to whose extraordinary effusions, as the Quarterly Review neatly puts it, "existing standards cannot be applied with exactness." There is Emily Brontë, whose verses we were permitted for years to ignore, and in whom we are now

peremptorily commanded to recognize a true poet. Miss Mary Robinson, who, in common with most female biographers, is an enthusiast rather than a critic, never wearies of praising the "splendid and vigorous movement" of Emily Brontë's poems, "with their surplus imagination, their sweeping impressiveness, their instinctive music and irregular rightness of form." On the other hand, Mr. Gosse, while acknowledging in them a very high order of merit, laments that such burning thoughts should be "concealed for the most part in the tame and ambling measures dedicated to female verse by the practice of Felicia Hemans and Letitia Landon." So far, indeed, from recognizing the "vigorous movement" and "irregular rightness of form" which Miss Robinson so much admires, he describes A Death Scene, one of the finest in point of conception, as "clothed in a measure that is like the livery of a charitable institution." "There 's allays two 'pinions," says Mr. Macey, in Silas Marner; but we cannot help sometimes wishing, in the cause of perspicuity, that they were not so radically different.

As for the pure absurdities of criticism, they may be culled like flowers from every branch, and are pleasing curiosities for those who have a liking for such relics. Were human nature less complacent in its self-sufficiency, they might even serve as useful warnings to the impetuous young reviewers of to-day, and so be not without their salutary influence on literature. Whether the result of ignorance, or dullness, or bad temper, of national or religious prejudices, or of mere personal pique, they have boldly challenged the ridicule of the world, and its amused contempt has pilloried them for all time. When Voltaire sneered at the Inferno, and thought Hamlet the work of a drunken savage, he at least made a bid for the approbation of his countrymen, who, as Schlegel wittily observes, were in the habit of speaking as though Louis XIV. had put an end to cannibalism in Europe. But what did Englishmen think when Hume informed them that Shakespeare was "born in a rude age, and educated in the lowest manner, without instruction from the world or from books;" and that he could not uphold for any time "a reasonable propriety of thought"? How did

they feel when William Maginn brutally declared that Keats

> "the doubly dead
> In that he died so young,"

was but a cockney poet, who wrote vulgar indecorums, "probably in the indulgence of his social propensities"? How did they feel when the same Maginn called the Adonais "dreary nonsense" and "a wild waste of words," and devoted bitter pages to proving that Shelley was not only undeserving, but "hopeless of poetic reputation"? Yet surely indignation must have melted into laughter, when this notable reviewer — who has been recently reprinted as a shining light for the new generation — added serenely that "a hundred or a hundred thousand verses might be made, equal to the best in Adonais, without taking the pen off the paper." This species of sweeping assertion has been repeated by critics more than once, to the annoyance of their friends and the malicious delight of their enemies. Ruskin, who, with all his gifts, seems cursed with what Mr. Bagehot calls "a mind of contrary flexure, whose particular bent it is to contradict what those around them say," has ven-

tured to tell the world that any head clerk of a bank could write a better history of Greece than Mr. Grote, if he would have the vanity to waste his time over it; and I have heard a man of fair attainments and of sound scholarship contend that there were twenty living authors who could write plays as fine as Shakespeare's.

Jeffrey's extraordinary blunders are too well known to need repetition, and Christopher North was not without his share of similar mishaps; Walpole cheerfully sentenced Scandinavian poetry in the bulk as the horrors of a Runic savage; Madame de Staël objected to the "commonness" of Miss Austen's novels; Wordsworth thought Voltaire dull, and Southey complained that Lamb's essays lacked "sound religious feeling;" George Borrow, whose literary tastes were at least as erratic as they were pronounced, condemned Sir Walter Scott's Woodstock as "tiresome, trashy, and unprincipled," and ranked Shakespeare, Pope, Addison, and the Welsh bard Huw Morris together as "great poets," apparently without recognizing any marked difference in their respective claims. Then there is Taine, who finds Pendennis and Vanity Fair too full of

sermons; Mr. Dudley Warner, who compares the mild and genial humor of Washington Irving to the acrid vigor of Swift; and Mr. Howells, who, perhaps in pity for our sense of loss, would fain persuade us that we could no longer endure either the "mannerisms" of Dickens or the "confidential attitude" of Thackeray, were we happy enough to see these great men still in our midst.

Imagine, ye who can, the fiery Hazlitt's wrath, if he but knew that in punishment for his youthful admiration of the Nouvelle Héloïse a close resemblance has been traced by friendly hands between himself and its author. Think of Lord Byron's feelings, if he could hear Mr. Swinburne saying that it was greatly to his — Byron's — credit that he knew himself for a third-rate poet! Even though it be the only thing to his credit that Swinburne has so far discovered, one doubts whether it would greatly mollify his lordship, or reconcile him to being classed as a "Bernesque poet," and the companion of those two widely different creatures, Southey and Offenbach. Perhaps, indeed, his lively sense of humor would derive a more positive gratification from

watching his angry critic run amuck through adjectives with frenzied agility. Such sentences as "the blundering, floundering, lumbering, and stumbling stanzas of Childe Harold, . . . the gasping, ranting, wheezing, broken-winded verse, . . . the hideous absurdities and jolter-headed jargon," must surely be less deeply offensive to Lord Byron's admirers than to Mr. Swinburne's. They come as near to describing the noble beauty of Childe Harold as does Southey's senseless collection of words to describing the cataract of Lodore, or any other cataract in existence; and, since the days when Milton and Salmasius hurled "Latin billingsgate" at each other's heads, we have had no stronger argument in favor of the comeliness of moderation.

"The most part of Mr. Swinburne's criticism," hints a recent reviewer, "is surely very much of a personal matter, — personal, one may say, in expression as well as in sensation." He has always a "neat hand at an epithet," and the "jolter-headed jargon" of Byron is no finer in its way than the "fanfaronade and falsetto of Gray." But even the charms of alliteration, joined to the fish-wife's slang

which has recently so tickled the fancy of Punch,[1] cannot wholly replace that clear-headed serenity which is the true test of a critic's worth and the most pleasing expression of his genius. He should have no visible inclination to praise or blame; it is not his business, as Mr. Bagehot puts it, to be thankful, and neither is he the queen's attorney pleading for conviction. Mr. Matthew Arnold, who considered that Byron was "the greatest natural force, the greatest elementary power, which has appeared in our literature since Shakespeare," presented his arguments plainly and without the faintest show of enthusiasm. He did not feel the need of reviling somebody else in order to emphasize his views, and he did not care to advance opinions without some satisfactory explanation of their existence. Mr. Courthope may content himself with saying that a matter is one not for argument, but for perception; but Mr. Arnold gave a reason for the faith that was in him. Mere preference on the part of a critic is not a sufficient sanction for his verdicts, or at least it does not

[1] "But when poet Swinburne steps into the fray,
And slangs like a fish-wife, what, *what* can one say?"

warrant his imparting them to the public. Swinburne may honestly think four lines of Wordsworth to be of more value than the whole of Byron, but that is no reason why we should think so too. When Mr. George Saintsbury avows a strong personal liking for some favorite authors, — Borrow and Peacock, for instance, — he modestly states that this fact is not in itself a convincing proof of their merit; but when Mr. Ernest Myers says that he would sacrifice the whole of Childe Harold to preserve one of Macaulay's Lays, he seems to be offering a really impressive piece of evidence. The tendency of critics to rush into print with whatever they chance to think has resulted in readers who naturally believe that what they think is every bit as good. Macaulay and Walter Savage Landor are both instances of men whose unusual powers of discernment were too often dimmed by their prejudices. Macaulay knew that Montgomery's poetry was bad, but he failed to see that Fouqué's prose was good; and Landor hit right and left, amid friends and foes, like the blinded Ajax scourging the harmless flocks.

It is quite as amusing and far less painful

to turn from the critics' indiscriminate abuse to their equally indiscriminate praise, and to read the glowing tributes heaped upon authors whose mediocrity has barely saved them from oblivion. Compare the universal rapture which greeted "the majestick numbers of Mr. Cowley" to the indifference which gave scant welcome to the Hesperides. Mr. Gosse tells us that for half a century Katherine Philips, the matchless Orinda, was an unquestioned light in English song. "Her name was mentioned with those of Sappho and Corinna, and language was used without reproach which would have seemed a little fulsome if addressed to the Muse herself."

> "For, as in angels, we
> Do in thy verses see
> Both improved sexes eminently meet;
> They are than Man more strong, and more than Woman sweet."

So sang Cowley to this much admired lady; and the Earl of Roscommon, in some more extravagant and amusing stanzas, asserted it to be his unique experience that, on meeting a pack of angry wolves in Scythia,

> "The magic of Orinda's name
> Not only can their fierceness tame,

But, if that mighty word I once rehearse,
They seem submissively to roar in verse."

"It is easier to flatter than to praise," says Jean Paul, but even flattery is not always the facile work it seems.

Sir Walter Scott, who was strangely disposed to undervalue his own merit as a poet, preserved the most genuine enthusiasm for the work of others. When his little daughter was asked by James Ballantyne what she thought of The Lady of the Lake, she answered with perfect simplicity that she had not read it. "Papa says there is nothing so bad for young people as reading bad poetry." Yet Sir Walter always spoke of Madoc and Thalaba with a reverence that would seem ludicrous were it not so frankly sincere. Southey himself could not have admired them more; and when Jeffrey criticised Madoc with flippant severity in the Edinburgh Review, we find Scott hastening to the rescue in a letter full of earnest and soothing praise. "A poem whose merits are of that higher tone," he argues, "does not immediately take with the public at large. It is even possible that during your own life you must be contented with the applause of the few whom na-

ture has gifted with the rare taste for discriminating in poetry. But the mere readers of verse must one day come in, and then Madoc will assume his real place, at the feet of Milton." [1] The mere readers of verse, being in no wise responsible for Milton's position in literature, have so far put no one at his feet; nor have they even verified Sir Walter's judgment when, writing again to Southey, he says with astonishing candor, "I am not such an ass as not to know that you are my better in poetry, though I have had, probably but for a time, the tide of popularity in my favor." The same spirit of self-depreciation, rare enough to be attractive, made him write to Joanna Baillie that, after reading some of her songs, he had thrust by his own in despair.

But if Sir Walter was an uncertain critic, his views on criticism were marked by sound and kindly discretion, and his patience under attack was the result of an evenly balanced mind, conscious of its own strength, yet too

[1] Compare Charles Lamb's letter to Coleridge: "On the whole I expect Southey one day to rival Milton; I already deem him equal to Cowper, and superior to all living poets besides."

sane to believe itself infallible. He had a singular fancy for showing his manuscripts to his friends, and it is quite delicious to see how doubtful and discouraging were their first comments. Gray, when hard pressed by the "light and genteel" verses of his companion, Richard West, was not more frugal of his doled-out praises. But Scott exacted homage neither from his acquaintances nor from the public. When it came — and it did come very soon in generous abundance — he basked willingly in the sunshine; but he had no uneasy vanity to be frightened by the shade. He would have been as sincerely amused to hear Mr. Borrow call Woodstock "tiresome, trashy, and unprincipled" as Matthew Arnold used to be when pelted with strong language by the London newspapers. "I have made a study of the Corinthian or leading-article style," wrote the great critic, with exasperating urbanity; "and I know its exigencies, and that they are no more to be quarreled with than the law of gravitation." In fact, the most hopeless barrier to strife is the steady indifference of a man who knows he has work to do, and who goes on doing it, irrespective of anybody's

opinion. Lady Harriet Ashburton, who dearly loved the war of words, in which she was sure to be a victor, was forced to confess that where no friction was excited, even her barbed shafts fell harmless. "It is like talking into a soft surface," she sighed, with whimsical despondency; "there is no rebound."

American critics have the reputation of being more kind-hearted than discriminating. The struggling young author, unless overweeningly foolish, has little to fear from their hands; and, if his reputation be once fairly established, all he chooses to write is received with a gratitude which seems excessive to the more exacting readers of France and England. If he be a humorist, we are always alert and straining to see the fun; if a story-teller, we politely smother our yawns, and say something about a keen analysis of character, a marked originality of treatment, or a purely unconventional theme; if a scholar, no pitfalls are dug for his unwary feet by reviewers like Mr. Collins. Such virulent and personal attacks we consider very uncomfortable reading, as in truth they are, and we have small appetite at any time for a sound kernel beneath a bitter

rind. Yet surely in these days, when young students turn impatiently from the very fountain-heads of learning, too much stress cannot be laid on the continuity of literature, and on the absolute importance of the classics to those who would intelligently explore the treasure-house of English verse. Moreover, Mr. Collins has aimed a few well-directed shafts against the ingenious system of mutual admiration, by which a little coterie of writers, modern Della Cruscans, help each other into prominence, while an unsuspecting public is made "the willing dupe of puffers." This delicate game, which is now conducted with such well-rewarded skill by a few enterprising players, consists, not so much in open flattery, though there is plenty of that too, as in the minute chronicling of every insignificant circumstance of each other's daily lives, from the hour at which they breakfast to the amount of exercise they find conducive to appetite, and the shape and size of their dining-room tables. We are stifled by the literary gossip which fills the newspapers and periodicals. Nothing is too trivial, nothing too irrelevant, to be told; and when, in the midst of an article on any subject,

from grand-dukes to gypsies, a writer gravely stops to explain that a perfectly valueless remark was made to him on such an occasion by his friend such a one, whose interesting papers on such a topic will be well remembered by the readers of such a magazine, we are forcibly reminded of the late Master of Trinity's sarcasm as to the many things that are too unimportant to be forgotten.

People fed on sugared praises cannot be expected to feel an appetite for the black broth of honest criticism. There was a time, now happily past, when the reviewer's skill lay simply in the clever detection of flaws; it was his business in life to find out whatever was weak or absurd in an author, and to hold it up for the amusement of those who were not quick enough to see such things for themselves. Now his functions are of a totally different order, and a great many writers seem to think it his sole duty to bring them before the public in an agreeable light, to say something about their books which will be pleasant for them to read and to pass over in turn to their friends. If he cannot do this, it is plain he has no sanction to say anything at all. That the critic

has a duty to the public itself is seldom remembered; that his work is of the utmost importance, and second in value only to the original conception he analyzes, is a truth few people take the pains to grasp. Coleridge thought him a mere maggot, battening upon authors' brains; yet how often has he helped us to gain some clear insight into this most shapeless and shadowy of great men! Wordsworth underrated his utility, yet Wordsworth's criticisms, save those upon his own poems, are among the finest we can read; and, to argue after the fashion of Mr. Myers, the average student would gladly exchange The Idiot Boy, or Goody Blake and Harry Gill, for another letter upon Dryden. As a matter of fact, the labors of the true critic are more essential to the author, even, than to the reader. It is natural that poets and novelists should devoutly believe that the creative faculty alone is of any true service to the world, and that it cannot rightly be put to trial by those to whom this higher gift is rigorously denied. But the critical power, though on a distinctly lower level than the creative, is of inestimable help in its development. Great work thrives

best in a critical atmosphere, and the clear light thrown upon the past is the surest of guides to the future. When the standard of criticism is high, when the influence of classical and foreign literature is understood and appreciated, when slovenly and ill-digested work is promptly recognized as such, then, and then only, may we look for the full expansion of a country's genius. To be satisfied with less is an amiable weakness rather than an invigorating stimulant to perfection.

Matthew Arnold's definition of true criticism is familiar to all his readers; it is simply "a disinterested endeavor to learn and propagate the best that is known and thought in the world." But by disinterestedness he did not mean merely that a critic must have no distinct design of flattering either his subject or his audience. He meant that in order to recognize what is really the best a man must free himself from every form of passion or prejudice, from every fixed opinion, from every practical consideration. He must not look at things from an English, or a French, or an American, standpoint. He has no business with politics or patriotism. These things are

excellent in themselves, and may be allowed to control his actions in other matters; but when the question at issue is the abstract beauty of a poem, a painting, a statue, or a piece of architecture, he is expected to stand apart from his every-day self, and to judge of it by some higher and universal law. This is a difficult task for most men, who do not respire easily in such exceedingly rarefied air, and who have no especial taste for blotting out their individuality. With Macaulay, for instance, political considerations frankly outweigh all others; he gives us the good Whig and the wicked Tory on every page, after the fashion of Hogarth's idle and industrious apprentices. Mr. Bagehot, while a far less transparent writer, manifests himself indirectly in his literary preferences. When we have read his essay on Shakespeare, we feel pretty sure we know his views on universal suffrage. Mr. Andrew Lang has indeed objected vehemently to the intrusion of politics into literature, perhaps because of a squeamish distaste for the harsh wranglings of the political field. But Mr. Arnold was incapable of confusing the two ideas. His taste for Celtic poetry and his

attitude towards home rule are both perfectly defined and perfectly isolated sentiments; just as his intelligent admiration and merciless condemnation of Heinrich Heine stand side by side, living witnesses of a mind that held its own balance, losing nothing that was good, condoning nothing that was evil, as far removed from weak enthusiasm on the one hand as from frightened depreciation on the other.

It is folly to rail at the critic until we have learned his value; it is folly to ignore a help which we are not too wise to need. "The best that is known and thought in the world" does not stand waiting for admission on our doorsteps. Like the happiness of Hesiod, it "abides very far hence, and the way to it is long and steep and rough." It is hard to seek, hard to find, and not easily understood when discovered. Criticism does not mean a random opinion on the last new novel, though even the most dismal of light literature comes fairly within its scope. It means a disinterested endeavor to learn and to teach whatever wisdom or beauty has been added by every age and every nation to the great inheritance of mankind.

SOME ASPECTS OF PESSIMISM.

When Mr. Matthew Arnold delivered his lecture on Emerson in this country, several years ago, it was delightful to see how the settled melancholy of his audience, who had come for a panegyric and did not get it, melted into genial applause when the lecturer touched at last upon the one responsive chord which bound his subject, his hearers, and himself in a sympathetic harmony, — I mean Emerson's lifelong, persistent, and unconquerable optimism. This was perhaps the more apparent because Mr. Arnold's addresses were not precisely the kind with which we Americans are best acquainted; they were singularly deficient in the oratorical flights that are wont to arouse our enthusiasm, and in the sudden descents to colloquial anecdote by which we expect to be amused. For real enjoyment it was advisable to read them over carefully after they were printed, and the oftener they

were so read the better they repaid perusal; but this not being the point of view from which ordinary humanity is apt to regard a lecture, it was with prompt and genuine relief that the audience hailed a personal appeal to that cheerful, healthy hopefulness of disposition which we like to be told we possess in common with greater men. It is always pleasant to hear that happiness is "the due and eternal result of labor, righteousness, and veracity," and to have it hinted to us that we have sane and wholesome minds because we think so; it is pleasanter still to be assured that the disparaging tone which religion assumes in relation to this earthly happiness arises from a well-intentioned desire to wean us from it, and not at all from a clear-sighted conviction of its feeble worth. When Mr. Arnold recited for our benefit a cheerless little scrap of would-be pious verse which he had heard read in a London schoolroom, all about the advantages of dying, —

> "For the world at best is a dreary place,
> And my life is getting low," —

we were glad to laugh over such dismal philosophy, and to feel within ourselves an exhilarating superiority of soul.

But self-satisfaction, if as buoyant as gas, has an ugly trick of collapsing when full-blown, and facts are stony things that refuse to melt away in the sunshine of a smile. Mr. Arnold, like Mr. Emerson, preached the gospel of compensation with much picturesqueness and beauty; but his arguments would be more convincing if our own observation and experience did not so mulishly stand in their way. A recent writer in Cornhill, who ought to be editing a magazine for Arcady, asserts with charming simplicity that man "finds a positive satisfaction in putting himself on a level with others, and in recognizing that he has his just share of life's enjoyments." But suppose that he cannot reach the level of others, or be persuaded that his share is just? The good things of life are not impartially divided, like the spaces on a draught-board, and man, who is a covetous animal, will never be content with a little, while his comrade enjoys a great deal. Neither does he find the solace that is expected in the contemplation of the unfortunate who has nothing; for this view of the matter, besides being a singular plea for the compensation theory, appeals too

coarsely to that root of selfishness which we are none of us anxious to exhibit. The average fustian-clad man is not too good to envy his neighbor's broadcloth, but he *is* too good to take comfort in his brother's nakedness. The sight of it may quicken his gratitude, but can hardly increase his happiness. Yet what did Mr. Arnold mean in his poem of Consolation — which is very charming, but not in the least consoling — save that the joys and sorrows of each hour balance themselves in a just proportion, and that the lovers' raptures and the blind robber's pain level the eternal scales. It is not a cheering bit of philosophy, whatever might have been the author's intention, for the very existence of suffering darkens the horizon for thoughtful souls. It would be an insult on the part of the lovers — lovers are odious things at best — to offer their arrogant bliss as indemnification to the wretch for his brimming cup of bitterness; but the vision of his seared eyeballs and sin-laden soul might justly moderate their own expansive felicity. Sorrow has a claim on all mankind, and when the utmost that Mr. Arnold could promise for our consolation was that time, the impartial,

"Brings round to all men
Some undimm'd hours."

we did not feel that he afforded us any broad ground for self-complacency.

The same key is struck with more firmness in that strange poem, The Sick King in Bokhara, where the vizier can find no better remedy for his master's troubled mind than by pointing out to him the vast burden of misery which rests upon the world, and which he is utterly powerless to avert. It is hardly worth while, so runs the vizier's argument, for the king to vex his soul over the sufferings of one poor criminal, whom his pity could not save, when the same tragic drama is being played with variations in every quarter of the globe. Behold, thousands are toiling for hard masters, armies are laying waste the peaceful land, robbers are harassing the mountain shepherds, and little children are being carried into captivity.

"The Kaffirs also (whom God curse!)
Vex one another night and day;
There are the lepers, and all sick;
There are the poor, who faint away.

"All these have sorrow and keep still,
Whilst other men make cheer and sing.
Wilt thou have pity on all these?
No, nor on this dead dog, O king!"

Whereupon the sick monarch, who does not seem greatly cheered by this category, adds in a disconsolate sort of way that he too, albeit envied of all men, finds his secret burdens hard to bear, and that not even to him is granted the fulfillment of desire, —

"And what I would, I cannot do."

Unless the high priests of optimism shall find us some stouter arguments than these with which to make merry our souls, it is to be feared that their opponents, who have at least the knack of stating their cases with pitiless lucidity, will hardly think our buoyancy worth pricking.

As for that small and compact band who steadfastly refuse to recognize in "this sad, swift life" any occasion for self-congratulation, they are not so badly off, in spite of their funereal trappings, as we are commonly given to suppose. It is only necessary to read a page of their writings — and few people care to read more — to appreciate how thoroughly

they enjoy the situation, and how, sitting with Hecate in her cave, they weave delicate thoughts out of their chosen darkness. They are full of the hopefulness of despair, and confident in the strength of the world's weakness. They assume that they not only represent great fundamental truths, but that these truths are for the first time being put forth in a concrete shape for the edification and adherence of mankind. Mr. Edgar Saltus informs us that, while optimism is as old as humanity, "systematic pessimism" is but a growth of the last half century, before which transition period we can find only individual expressions of discontent. Mr. Mallock claims that he is the first who has ever inquired into the worth of life "in the true scientific spirit." But when we come to ask in what systematic or scientific pessimism differs from the older variety which has found a home in the hearts of men from the beginning, we do not receive any very coherent answer. From Mr. Mallock, indeed, we hardly expect any. It is his province in literature to propose problems which the reader, after the fashion of The Lady or the Tiger? is permitted to solve for

himself. But does Mr. Saltus really suppose that Schopenhauer and Hartmann have made much headway in reducing sadness to a science, that love is in any danger of being supplanted by the "genius of the species," or that the "principle of the unconscious" is at all likely to extinguish our controlling force? What have these two subtle thinkers said to the world that the world has not practically known and felt for thousands of years already? Hegesias, three centuries before Christ, was quite as systematic as Schopenhauer, and his system begot more definite results; for several of his disciples hanged themselves out of deference for his teachings, whereas it may be seriously doubted whether all the persuasive arguments of the Welt als Wille und Vorstellung have ever made or are likely to make a single celibate. Marcus Aurelius was as logically convinced of the inherent worthlessness of life as Dr. Hartmann, and, without any scientific apparatus whatever, he stamped his views on the face of a whole nation. We are now anxiously warned by Mr. Saltus not to confound scientific pessimism with that accidental melancholy which is the result of our own per-

sonal misfortunes; but Leopardi, whose unutterable despair arose solely from his personal misfortunes, or rather from his moral inability to cope with them, — for Joubert, who suffered as much, has left a trail of heavenly light upon his path, — Leopardi alone lays bare for us the

> "Tears that spring and increase
> In the barren places of mirth,"

with an appalling accuracy from which we are glad to turn away our shocked and troubled eyes.

It is a humiliating fact that, notwithstanding our avaricious greed for novelties, we are forced, when sincere, to confess that "*les anciens ont tout dit*," and that it is probable the contending schools of thought have always held the same relative positions they do now: optimism glittering in the front ranks as a deservedly popular favorite; pessimism speaking with a still, persistent voice to those who, unluckily for themselves, have the leisure and the intelligence to attend. Schopenhauer hated the Jews with all his heart for being such stubborn optimists, and it is true that their records bear ample witness to the strong hold they took on the pleasures and the profits

of the world. But their noblest and clearest voices, Isaias, Jeremias, Ezekiel, speak a different language; and Solomon, who, it must be granted, enjoyed a wider experience than most men, renders a cheerless verdict of vanity and vexation of spirit for "all things that are done under the sun." The Egyptians, owing chiefly to their tender solicitude about their tombs, have taken rank in history as a people enamoured rather of death than of life; and from the misty flower-gardens of Buddha have been gathered for centuries the hemlock and nightshade that adorn the funeral-wreaths of literature.

But the Greeks, the blithe and jocund Greeks, who, as Mr. Arnold justly observed, ought never to have been either sick or sorry, — to them, at least, we can turn for that wholesome joy, that rational delight in mere existence, which we have somehow let slip from our nerveless grasp. Whether it was because this world gave him so much, such rare perfection in all material things, or because his own conception of the world to come promised him so exceedingly little, — for one or both of these reasons, the average Greek

preferred to cling tenaciously to the good he had, to the hills, and the sea, and the sunshine, rather than to

> "Move among shadows, a shadow, and wail by impassable streams;"

and his choice, under the circumstances, is perhaps hardly a matter for amazement. That a people so richly endowed should be in love with life seems to us right and natural; that amid their keen realization of its fullness and beauty we find forever sounded — and not always in a minor key — the same old notes of weariness and pain is a discouraging item, when we would like to build up an exhaustive theory of happiness. Far, far back, in the Arcadian days of Grecian piety and simplicity, the devout agriculturist Hesiod looked sorrowfully over the golden fields, searching vainly for a joy that remained ever out of reach. Homer, in a passage which Mr. Peacock says is nearly always incorrectly translated, has given us a summary of life which would not put a modern German to the blush:—

> "Jove, from his urns dispensing good and ill,
> Gives ill unmixed to some, and good and ill
> Mingled to many, good unmixed to none."

Sophocles says uncompromisingly that man's happiest fate is not to be born at all; and that, failing this good fortune, the next best thing is to die as quickly as possible. Menander expresses the same thought more sweetly: —

"Whom the gods love die young;"

and Euripides, the most reverent soul ever saddened by the barrenness of paganism, forces into one bitter line all the bleak hopelessness of which the Greek tragedy alone is capable: —

"Life is called life, but it is truly pain."

Even as isolated sentiments, these ever-recurring reflections diminish perceptibly the sum of a nation's gayety, and, if we receive the drama as the mouthpiece of the people, we are inclined to wonder now and then how they ever could have been cheerful at all. It is easy, on the other hand, to point to Admetos and Antigone as two standing examples of the great value the Greeks placed upon life; for the sacrifice of Alkestis was not in their eyes the sordid bargain it appears in ours, and the daughter of Œdipus goes to her death with a

shrinking reluctance seemingly out of keeping with her heroic mould. But Admetos, excuse him as we may, is but a refinement of a common type, old as mankind, and no great credit to its ranks. He may be found in every page of the world's history, from the siege of Jerusalem to the siege of Paris. À Kempis has transfixed him with sharp scorn in his chapter On the Consideration of Human Misery, and a burning theatre or a sinking ship betray him, shorn of poetical disguise, in all his unadorned brutality. But to find fault with Antigone, the noblest figure in classical literature, because she manifests a natural dislike for being buried alive is to carry our ideal of heroism a little beyond reason. Flesh and blood shrink from the sickening horror that lays its cold hand upon her heart. She is young, beautiful, and beloved, standing on the threshold of matrimony, and clinging with womanly tenderness to the sacred joys that are never to be hers. She is a martyr in a just cause, but without one ray of that divine ecstasy that sent Christian maidens smiling to the lions. Beyond a chilly hope that she will not be unwelcome to her parents, or to the

brother she has vainly striven to save from desecration, Antigone descends

"Into the dreary mansions of the dead,"

uncheered by any throb of expectation. Finally, the manner of her death is too appalling to be met with stoicism. Juliet, the bravest of Shakespeare's heroines, quails before the thought of a few unconscious hours spent in the darkness of the tomb; and if our more exalted views demand indifference to such a fate, we must not look to the Greeks, nor to him who

"Saw life steadily, and saw it whole,"

for the fulfillment of our idle fancy.

Youth, health, beauty, and virtue were to the ancient mind the natural requisites for happiness; yet even these favors were so far at best from securing it, that "nature's most pleasing invention, early death," was too often esteemed the rarest gift of all. When Schopenhauer says of the fourth commandment, "'Honor thy father and thy mother, that thy days may be long in the land,'—ah! what a misfortune to hold out as a reward for duty!" we feel both shocked and repulsed by

this deliberate rejection of what is offered us as a blessing; but it is at least curious to note that the happy Greeks held much the same opinion. When the sons of Cydippe — those models of filial devotion — shamed not to yoke themselves like oxen to the cart, and with strong young arms to drag their mother to the feast of Hera, the ancient priestess begged of the dread goddess that she would grant them her best gift; and the prayer was answered, not with length of days, nor with the regal power and splendor promised of old to Paris, but with a boon more precious still than all.

"Whereat the statue from its jeweled eyes
Lightened, and thunder ran from cloud to cloud
In heaven, and the vast company was hushed.
But when they sought for Cleobis, behold,
He lay there still, and by his brother's side
Lay Biton, smiling through ambrosial curls,
And when the people touched them they were dead."[1]

It is hard to assert in the face of a narrative like this that the Greeks valued nothing as much as the mere delight of existence.

As for the favorite theory that Christianity is responsible for the weakening of earthly happiness, and that her ministers have system

[1] The Sons of Cydippe, by Edmund Gosse.

atically disparaged the things of this world in order to quicken our desire for things eternal, it might suffice to hint that Christianity is a large word, and represents at present a great many different phases of thought. Mr. Arnold objected, rationally enough, to the lugubrious hymns from which the English middle classes are wont to draw their spiritual refreshment; and Dr. Holmes, it will be remembered, has spoken quite as strongly in regard to their depressing influence upon New England households. But Christianity and the modern hymn-book are by no means synonymous terms, and to claim that the early church deliberately lowered the scale of human joy is a very different and a very grave charge, and one which Mr. Pater, in Marius the Epicurean, has striven valiantly to refute. With what clear and delicate touches he paints for us the innocent gayety of that new birth, — a gayety with no dark background, and no heart-breaking limits of time and space. Compared to it, the sombre and multitudinous rites of the Romans and the far-famed blitheness of the Greeks seem incurably narrow and insipid. The Christians of the catacombs were essen-

tially a cheerful body, having for their favorite emblem the serene image of the Good Shepherd, and believing firmly that "grief is the sister of doubt and ill-temper, and beyond all spirits destroyeth man." If in the Middle Ages the Church apparently darkened earth to brighten heaven, it was simply because she took life as she found it, and strove, as she still strives, to teach the only doctrine of compensation that the tyranny of facts cannot cheaply overthrow. The mediæval peasant may have been less badly off, on the whole, than we are generally pleased to suppose. He was, from all accounts, a robust, unreasoning creature, who held his neck at the mercy of his feudal lord, and the rest of his scanty possessions at the discretion of the tax-gatherer; but who had not yet bared his back to the intolerable sting of that modern gadfly, the professional agitator and socialistic champion of the poor. Yet even without this last and sorest infliction, it is probable that life was to him but little worth the living, and that religion could not well paint the world much blacker than he found it. There was scant need, in his case, for disparaging the pleasures

of the flesh; and hope, lingering alone in his Pandora box of troubles, saved him from utter annihilation by pointing steadily beyond the doors of death.

As a matter of fact, the abstract question of whether our present existence be enjoyable or otherwise is one which creeds do not materially modify. A pessimist may be deeply religious like Pascal and Châteaubriand, or utterly skeptical like Schopenhauer and Hartmann, or purely philosophical like faint-hearted Amiel. He may agree with Lamennais, that "man is the most suffering of all creatures;" or with Voltaire, that "happiness is a dream, and pain alone is real." He may listen to Saint Theresa, "It is given to us either to die or to suffer;" or to Leopardi, "Life is fit only to be despised." He may read in the diary of that devout recluse, Eugénie de Guérin that "dejection is the groundwork of human life;" or he may turn over the pages of Sir Walter Raleigh, and see how a typical man of the world, soldier, courtier, and navigator, can find no words ardent enough in which to praise "the workmanship of death, that finishes the sorrowful business

of a wretched life." I do not mean to imply that Leopardi and Eugénie de Guérin regarded existence from the same point of view, or found the same solace for their pain; but that they both struck the keynote of pessimistic philosophy by recognizing that, in this world at least, sorrow outbalances joy, and that it is given to all men to eat their bread in tears. On the other hand, if we are disinclined to take this view, we shall find no lack of guides, both saints and sinners, ready to look the Sphinx smilingly in the face, and puzzle out a different answer to her riddle.

Another curious notion is that poets have a prescriptive right to pessimism, and should feel themselves more or less obliged, in virtue of their craft, to take upon their shoulders the weight of suffering humanity. Mr. James Sully, for instance, whose word, as a student of these matters, cannot be disregarded, thinks it natural and almost inevitable that a true poet should be of a melancholy cast, by reason of the sensitiveness of his moral nature and his exalted sympathy for pain. But it has yet to be proved that poets are a more compassionate race than their obscurer breth-

ren who sit in counting-houses or brew beer. They are readier, indeed, to moralize over the knife-grinder, but quite as slow to tip him the coveted sixpence. Shelley, whose soul swelled at the wrongs of all mankind, did not hesitate to inflict pain on the one human being whom it was his obvious duty to protect. But then Shelley, like Carlyle, belonged to the category of reformers rather than to the pessimists; believing that though the world as he saw it was as bad as possible, things could be easily mended by simply turning them topsy-turvy under his direction. Now the pessimist proper is the most modest of men. He does not flatter himself for a moment that he can alter the existing state of evil, or that the human race, by its combined efforts, can do anything better than simply cease to live. He may entertain with Novalis a shadowy hope that when mankind, wearied of its own impotence, shall efface itself from the bosom of the earth, a better and happier species shall fill the vacant land. Or he may believe with Hartmann that there is even less felicity possible in the coming centuries than in the present day; that humanity is already on the wane; that the

higher we stand in the physical and intellectual scale the more inevitable becomes our suffering; and that when men shall have thrown aside the last illusion of their youth, namely, the hope of any obtainable good either in this world or in another, they will then no longer consent to bear the burden of life, but, by the supreme force of their united volition, will overcome the resistance of nature, and achieve the destruction of the universe. But under no circumstances does he presume to imagine that he, a mere unit of pain, can in any degree change or soften the remorseless words of fate.

To return to the poets, however, it is edifying to hear Mr. Leslie Stephen assert that "nothing is less poetical than optimism," or to listen to Mr. John Addington Symonds, who, scanning the thoughtful soul for a solution of man's place in the order of creation, can find for him no more joyous task than, Prometheus-like,

"To dree life's doom on Caucasus."

Even when a poem appears to the uninitiated to be of a cheerful, not to say blithesome cast,

the critics are busy reading unutterable sadness between the lines; and while we smile at Puck, and the fairies, and the sweet Titania nursing her uncouth love, we must remember that the learned Dr. Ulrici has pronounced the Midsummer Night's Dream to be a serious homily, preached with grave heart to an unthinking world. But is Robin Goodfellow really a missionary in disguise, and are the poets as pessimistic in their teaching as their interpreters would have us understand? Heine undoubtedly was, and Byron pretended to be. Keats, with all the pathos of his shadowed young life, was nothing of the sort, nor was Milton, nor Goethe, nor Wordsworth; while Scott, lost, apparently, to the decent requirements of his art, confessed unblushingly that fortune could not long play a dirge upon his buoyant spirits. And Shakespeare? Why, he was all and everything. Day and night, sunlight and starlight, were embraced in his affluent nature. He laid his hand on the quivering pulses of the world, and, recognizing that life was often in itself both pleasant and good, he yet knew, and knew it without pain, that death was better still. Look only

at the character of Horatio, the very type of the blithe, sturdy, and somewhat commonplace young student, to whom enjoyment seems a birthright, —

> "A man that fortune's buffets and rewards
> Hast ta'en with equal thanks."

Yet it is to this man, of all others, that the dying Hamlet utters the pathetic plea,—

> "If thou didst ever hold me in thy heart,
> Absent thee from felicity awhile,
> And in this harsh world draw thy breath in pain
> To tell my story."

Here at last is a ray of real light, guiding us miles away from the murky paths of modern French and English poetry, where we have stumbled along, growing despondent in the gloom. To brave life cheerfully, to welcome death gladly, are possible things, after all, and better worth man's courage and convictions than to dree on Caucasus forever.

It is ludicrous to turn from the poets to the politicians, but nowadays every question, even the old unanswered one, "Is life worth living?" must needs be viewed from its political standpoint. What can be more delightful than to hear Mr. Courthope assert that op-

timism is the note of the Liberal party, while the Conservatives are necessarily pessimistic? — especially when one remembers the genial utterance of Mr. Walter Bagehot, contending that the very essence of Toryism is enjoyment. "The way to be satisfied with existing things is to enjoy them." Yet Sir Francis Doyle bears witness in his memoirs that the stoutest of Tories can find plenty to grumble at, which is not altogether surprising in a sadly ill-regulated world; and while the optimistic Liberal fondly believes that he is marching straight along the chosen road to the gilded towers of El Dorado, the less sanguine Conservative contents himself with trying, after his dull, practical fashion, to step clear of some of the ruts and quagmires by the way. As for the extreme Radicals, — and every nation has its full share of these gentry, — their optimism is too glittering for sober eyes to bear. A classical tradition says that each time Sisyphos rolls his mighty stone up the steep mountain side he believes that it will reach the summit; and, its ever-repeated falls failing to teach him any surer lesson, his doom, like that of our reforming brothers, is softened into eternal

hope. But it may at least be questioned whether the other inhabitants of Tartarus — none of whom, it will be remembered, are without their private grievances — do not occasionally weary of the dust and racket, and of the great ball forever thundering about their ears, as it rolls impotently down to the level whence it came.

The pessimist, however, — be it recorded to his credit, — is seldom an agitating individual. His creed breeds indifference to others, and he does not trouble himself to thrust his views upon the unconvinced. We have, indeed, an anecdote of Dr. Johnson, who broadly asserted upon one occasion that no one could well be happy in this world, whereupon an unreasonable old lady had the bad taste to contradict him, and to insist that she, for one, was happy, and knew it. "Madam," replied the irate philosopher, "it is impossible. You are old, you are ugly, you are sickly and poor. How, then, can you be happy?" But this, we think, was rather a natural burst of indignation on the good doctor's part than a distinct attempt at proselytizing, though it is likely that he somewhat damped the boasted

felicity of his antagonist. Schopenhauer, the great apostle of pessimism, while willing enough to make converts on a grand scale, was scornfully unconcerned about the every-day opinions of his every-day — I was going to say associates, but the fact is that Schopenhauer was never guilty of really associating with anybody. He had at all times the courage of his convictions, and delighted in illustrating his least attractive theories. Teaching asceticism, he avoided women; despising human companionship, he isolated himself from men. A luminous selfishness guided him through life, and saved him from an incredible number of discomforts. It was his rule to expect nothing, to desire as little as possible, and to learn all he could. Want, he held to be the scourge of the poor, as *ennui* is that of the rich; accordingly, he avoided the one by looking sharply after his money, and the other by working with unremitting industry. Pleasure, he insisted, was but a purely negative quality, a mere absence from pain. He smiled at the sweet, hot delusions of youth, and shrugged his shoulders over the limitless follies of manhood, regarding both from the

standpoint of a wholly disinterested observer. If the test of happiness in the Arabian paradise be to hear the measured beating of one's own heart, Schopenhauer was certainly qualified for admission. Even in this world he was so far from being miserable, that an atmosphere of snug comfort surrounds the man whose very name has become a synonym for melancholy; and to turn from his cold and witty epigrams to the smothered despair that burdens Leopardi's pages is like stepping at once from a pallid, sunless afternoon into the heart of midnight. It is always a pleasant task for optimists to dwell as much as possible on the buoyancy with which every healthy man regards his unknown future, and on the natural pleasure he takes in recalling the brightness of the past; but Leopardi, playing the trump card of pessimism, demonstrates with merciless precision the insufficiency of such relief. We cannot in reason expect, he argues, that, with youth behind us and old age in front, our future will be any improvement on our past, for with increasing years come increasing sorrows to all men; and as for the boasted happiness of that past, which

of us would live it over again for the sake of the joys it contained? Memory cheats us no less than hope by hazing over those things that we would fain forget; but who that has plodded on to middle age would take back upon his shoulders ten of the vanished years, with their mingled pleasures and pains? Who would return to the youth he is forever pretending to regret?

Such thoughts are not cheerful companions; but if they stand the test of application, it is useless to call them morbid. The pessimist does not contend that there is no happiness in life, but that, for the generality of mankind, it is outbalanced by trouble; and this flinty assurance is all he has to offer in place of the fascinating theory of compensation. It would seem as though no sane man could hesitate between them, if he had the choice, for one pleasant delusion is worth a hundred disagreeable facts; but in this serious and truth-hunting age people have forgotten the value of fiction, and, like sulky children, refuse to play at anything. Certainly it would be hard to find a more dispiriting literature than we enjoy at present. Scientists, indeed, are reported

by those who have the strength of mind to follow them as being exceedingly merry and complacent; but the less ponderous illuminati, to whom feebler souls turn instinctively for guidance, are shining just now with a severe and chastened light. When on pleasure bent they are as frugal as Mrs. Gilpin, but they sup sorrow with a long spoon, utterly regardless of their own or their readers' digestions. Germany still rings with Heine's discordant laughter, and France, rich in the poets of decadence, offers us Les Fleurs du Mal to wear upon our bosoms. England listens, sighing, while Carlyle's denunciations linger like muttering thunder in the air; or while Mr. Ruskin, "the most inspired of the modern prophets," vindicates his oracular spirit by crying,

"Woe! woe! O earth! Apollo, O Apollo!"

with the monotonous persistency of Cassandra. Mr. Mallock, proud to kneel at Mr. Ruskin's feet as "an intellectual debtor to a public teacher," binds us in his turn within the fine meshes of his exhaustless subtleties, until we grow light-headed rather than light-hearted

under such depressing manipulation. Mr. Pater, who at one time gave us to understand that he would teach us how to enjoy life, has, so far, revealed nothing but its everlasting sadness. If the old Cyrenaics were no gayer than their modern representatives, Aristippus of Cyrene might just as well have been Diogenes sulking in his tub, or Heraclitus adding useless tears to the trickling moisture of his cave.

Even our fiction has grown disconcertingly sad within the last few years, and with a new order of sadness, invented apparently to keep pace with the melancholy march of mind. The novelist of the past had but two courses open to him: either to leave Edwin and Angelina clasped in each other's arms, or to provide for one of them a picturesque and daisy-strewn grave. Ordinarily he chose the former alternative, as being less harassing to himself, and more gratifying to his readers. Books that end badly have seldom been really popular, though sometimes a tragic conclusion is essential to the artistic development of the story. When Tom and Maggie Tulliver go down, hand in hand, amid the rushing waters of the Floss, we feel, even through our tears, — and

mine are fresh each time I read the page, — that the one possible solution of the problem has been reached; that only thus could the widely contrasting natures of brother and sister meet in unison, and the hard-fought battle be gained. Such an end is not sad, it is happy and beautiful; and, moreover, it is in a measure inevitable, the climax being shadowed from the beginning, as in the tragedy of the Greeks, and the whole tale moving swiftly and surely to its appointed close. If we compare a finely chiseled piece of work like this with the flat, faintly colored sketches which are at present passing muster for novels, we feel that beauty of form is something not compounded of earthly materials only, and that neither the savage strength of French and Russian realism, nor the dreary monotony of German speculative fiction, can lift us any nearer the tranquil realms of art.

Nor can we even claim that we have gained in cheerfulness what we have lost in symmetry, for the latest device of the pessimistic story-writer is to marry his pair of lovers, and then coldly inform us that, owing to the inevitable evils of life, they were not particularly

happy after all. Now Lady Martin (Helen Faucit), that loving student and impersonator of Shakespeare's heroines, has expressed her melancholy conviction that the gentle Hero was but ill-mated with one so fretful and paltry-souled as Claudio; and that Imogen the fair was doomed to an early death, the bitter fruit of her sad pilgrimage to Milford-Haven. But be this as it may, — and we more than fear that Lady Martin is rightly acquainted with the matter, — Shakespeare himself has whispered us no word of such ill-tidings, but has left us free, an' it please us, to dream out happier things. So, too, Dorothea Brooke, wedded to Will Ladislaw, has before her many long and weary hours of regretful self-communings; yet, while we sigh over her doubtful future, we are glad, nevertheless, to take our last look at her smiling in her husband's arms. But when Basil Ransom, in The Bostonians, makes a brave fight for his young bride, and carries her off in triumph, we are not for a moment permitted to feel elated at his victory. We want to rejoice with Verena, and to congratulate her on her escape from Mr. Filer and the tawdry music-

hall celebrity; but we are forced to take leave of her in tears, and to hear with unwilling ears that "these were not the last she was destined to shed." This hurts our best feelings, and hurts them all the more because we have allowed our sympathies to be excited. It reminds us of that ill-natured habit of the Romans, who were ungrateful enough to spoil a conqueror's triumph by hiring somebody to stand in his chariot, and keep whispering in his ear that he was only human, after all; and it speaks volumes for the stern self-restraint of the Roman nature that the officious truth-teller was not promptly kicked out in the dust. In the same grudging spirit, Mr. Thomas Hardy, after conducting one of his heroines safely through a great many trials, and marrying her at last to the husband of her choice, winds up, by way of wedding-bells, with the following consolatory reflections: "Her experience had been of a kind to teach her, rightly or wrongly, that the doubtful honor of a brief transit through a sorry world hardly called for effusiveness, even when the path was suddenly irradiated at some half-way point by day-dreams rich as hers. . . . And in being forced

to class herself among the fortunate, she did not cease to wonder at the persistence of the unforeseen, when the one to whom such unbroken tranquillity had been accorded in the adult stage was she whose youth had seemed to teach that happiness was but the occasional episode in a general drama of pain." "What should a man do but be merry?" says Hamlet drearily; and, with this reckless mirth pervading even our novels, we bid fair in time to become as jocund as he.

THE CAVALIER.

"An evil reputation is light to raise, but heavy to bear, and very difficult to put aside. No Rumor which many people chatter of altogether dieth away; she too is, after her kind, an immortal." So moralizes Hesiod over an exceedingly thankless truth, which, even in the primitive simplicity of the golden age, had forced itself upon man's unwilling convictions; and while many later philosophers have given caustic expression to the same thought, few have clothed it with more delicate and agreeable irony. Rumor is, after her kind, an immortal. Antæus-like, she gains new strength each time she is driven to the ground, and it is a wholesome humiliation for our very enlightened minds to see how little she has suffered from centuries of analysis and research. Rumor still writes our histories, directs our diplomacy, and controls our ethics, until we have grown to think that this is probably what is meant by the *vox populi*, and that any

absurdity credited by a great many people becomes in some mysterious way sacred to the cause of humanity, and infinitely more precious than truth. When Wodrow, and Walker, and the author of The Cloud of Witnesses, were compiling their interesting narratives, Rumor, in the person of "ilka auld wife in the chimley-neuck," gave them all the information they desired; and this information, countersigned by Macaulay, has passed muster for history down to the present day. As a result, the introduction of Graham of Claverhouse into Mr. Lang's list of English Worthies has been received with severely qualified approbation, and Mr. Mowbray Morris has written the biography of a great soldier in the cautious tone of a lawyer pleading for a criminal at the bar.

If ever the words of Hesiod stood in need of an accurate illustration, it has been furnished by the memory of Claverhouse; for his evil reputation was not only raised with astonishing facility, but it has never been put aside at all. In fact, it seems to have been a matter of pride in the grim-visaged Scottish saints to believe that their departed brethren were, one

and all, the immediate victims of his wrath; and to hint that they might perhaps have fallen by any meaner hand was, as Aytoun wittily expressed it, "an insult to martyrology." The terror inspired by his inflexible severity gave zest to their lurid denunciations, and their liveliest efforts of imagination were devoted to conjuring up in his behalf some fresh device of evil. In that shameless pasquinade, the Elegy, there is no species of wickedness that is not freely charged, in most vile language, to the account of every Jacobite in the land, from the royal house of Stuart down to its humblest supporter; yet even amid such goodly company, Claverhouse stands preëminent, and is the recipient of its choicest flowers of speech.

> "He to Rome's cause most firmly stood,
> And drunken was with the saints' blood.
> He rifled houses, and did plunder
> In moor and dale many a hunder;
> He all the shires in south and west
> With blood and rapine sore opprest."

It is needless to say that Claverhouse, though he served a Catholic master, had about as much affinity for the Church of Rome as the great Gustavus himself, and that the ex-

tent of his shortcomings in this direction lay in his protesting against the insults offered by a Selkirk preacher to King James through the easy medium of his religion.

Now it is only natural that the Covenanters, who feared and hated Dundee, should have found infinite comfort in believing that he was under the direct protection of Satan. In those days of lively faith, the charge was by no means an uncommon one, and the dark distinction was shared by any number of his compatriots. On the death of Sir Robert Grierson of Lag, the devil, who had waited long for his prey, manifested his sense of satisfaction by providing an elaborate funeral cortége, which came over the sea at midnight, with nodding plumes and sable horses, to carry off in ostentatious splendor the soul of this much-honored guest. Prince Rupert was believed by the Roundheads to owe his immunity from danger to the same diabolic agency which made Claverhouse proof against leaden bullets; and his white dog, Boy, was regarded with as much awe as was Dundee's famous black charger, the gift of the evil one himself. As a fact, Boy was not altogether unworthy of

his reputation, for he could fight almost as well as his master, though unluckily without sharing in his advantages; for the poor brute was shot at Marston Moor, in the very act of pulling down a rebel. Even the clergy, it would seem, were not wholly averse to Satan's valuable patronage; for Wodrow — to whose claims as an historian Mr. Morris is strangely lenient — tells us gravely how the unfortunate Archbishop of St. Andrew's cowered trembling in the Privy Council, when Janet Douglas, then on trial for witchcraft, made bold to remind him of the "meikle black devil" who was closeted with him the last Saturday at midnight.

But even our delighted appreciation of these very interesting and characteristic legends cannot altogether blind us to the dubious quality of history based upon such testimony, and it is a little startling to see that, as years rolled by, the impression they created remained practically undimmed. Colonel Fergusson, in the preface to his delightful volume on The Laird of Lag, confesses that in his youth it was still a favorite Halloween game to dress up some enterprising member of the household

as a hideous beast with a preternaturally long nose, — made, in fact, of a saucepan handle; and that this creature, who went prowling stealthily around the dim halls and firelit kitchen, frightening the children into shrieks of terror, was supposed to represent the stout old cavalier searching for his ancient foes the Covenanters. Lag's memory appears to have been given up by universal consent to every species of opprobrium, and his misdeeds have so far found no apologist, unless, indeed, Macaulay may count as one, when he gracefully transfers part of them to Claverhouse's shoulders. Mr. Morris coldly mentions Sir Robert Grierson as "coarse, cruel, and brutal beyond even the license of those days;" Colonel Fergusson is far too clever to weaken the dramatic force of his book by hinting that his hero was not a great deal worse than other men; and Scott, in that inimitable romance, Wandering Willie's Tale, has thrown a perfect glamour of wickedness around the old laird's name. But in truth, when we come to search for sober proven facts; when we discard — reluctantly, indeed, but under compulsion — the spiked barrel in which he was

pleased to roll the Covenanters, in Carthaginian fashion, down the Scottish hills; and the iron hook in his cellar, from which it was his playful fancy to depend them; and the wine which turned to clotted blood ere it touched his lips; and the active copartnership of Satan in his private affairs, — when we lay aside these picturesque traditions, there is little left save a charge, not altogether uncommon, of indecorum in his cups, the ever-vexed question of the Wigtown martyrs, and a few rebels who were shot, like John Bell, after scant trial, but who, Heaven knows, would have gained cold comfort by having their cases laid before the council. On the other hand, it might be worth while to mention that Lag was brave, honest, not rapacious, and, above all, true to his colors when the tide had turned, and he was left alone in his old age to suffer imprisonment and disgrace.

But if the memory of a minor actor in these dark scenes has come down to us so artistically embellished, what may we not expect of one who played a leading part through the whole stormy drama? "The chief of this Tophet on earth," is the temperate phrase applied to

Claverhouse by Macaulay, and it sufficiently illustrates the position popularly assigned him by his foes. Rumor asserted in his behalf her triumphant immortality, and crystallized into tradition every floating charge urged by the Covenanters against his fame. So potent and far-reaching was her voice that it became in time a virtuous necessity to echo it; and we actually find Southey writing to Scott in 1807, and regretting that Wordsworth should have thought fit to introduce the Viscount of Dundee into the sonnet on Killiecrankie, without any apparent censure of his conduct. Scott, who took a somewhat easier view of poetical obligations, and who probably thought that Killiecrankie was hardly the fitting spot on which to recall Dundee's shortcomings, wrote back very plainly that he thought there had been censure enough already; and nine years later he startled the good people of Edinburgh, on his own account, by the publication of that eminently heterodox novel, Old Mortality. Lockhart tells us that the theme was suggested to Sir Walter by his friend Mr. Joseph Train, who, when visiting at Abbotsford, was much struck by the solitary picture

in the poet's library, a portrait of Graham of Claverhouse.

"He expressed the surprise with which every one who had known Dundee only in the pages of the Presbyterian annalists must see for the first time that beautiful and melancholy visage, worthy of the most pathetic dreams of romance. Scott replied that no character had been so foully traduced as the Viscount of Dundee; that, thanks to Wodrow, Cruikshanks, and such chroniclers, he who was every inch a soldier and a gentleman still passed among the Scottish vulgar for a ruffian desperado, who rode a goblin horse, was proof against shot, and in league with the devil.

"'Might he not,' said Train, 'be made, in good hands, the hero of a national romance, as interesting as any about either Wallace or Prince Charlie?'

"'He might,' said Scott, 'but your western zealots would require to be faithfully portrayed in order to bring him out with the right effect.'"

Train then described to Sir Walter the singular character of Old Mortality, and the result was that incomparable tale which took

the English reading world by storm, and provoked in Scotland a curious fever of excitement, indignation, and applause. The most vigorous protest against its laxity came from Thomas MacCrie, one of the numerous biographers of John Knox, "who considered the representation of the Covenanters in the story of Old Mortality as so unfair as to demand, at his hands, a very serious rebuke." This rebuke was administered at some length in a series of papers published in the Edinburgh Christian Instructor. Scott, the "Black Hussar of Literature," replied with much zest and spirit in the Quarterly Review; cudgels were taken up on both sides, and the war went briskly on, until Jeffrey the Great in some measure silenced the controversy by giving it as his ultimatum that the treatment of an historical character in a work of pure fiction was a matter of very trifling significance. It is not without interest that we see the same querulous virtue that winced under Sir Walter's frank enthusiasm for Claverhouse uttering its protest to-day against the more chilly and scrupulous vindications of Mr. Morris's biography. "An apology for the crimes of a hired

butcher," one critic angrily calls the sober little volume, forgetting in his heat that the term "hired butcher," though most scathing in sound, is equally applicable to any soldier, from the highest to the lowest, who is paid by his government to kill his fellow-men. War is a rough trade, and if we choose to call names, it is as easy any time to say "butcher" as "hero." Stronger words have not been lacking to vilify Dundee, and many of these choice anathemas belong, one fears, to Luther's catalogue of "downright, infamous, scandalous lies." Their freshness, however, is as amazing as their ubiquity, and they confront us every now and then in the most forlorn nooks and crannies of literature. Not very long ago I was shut up for half an hour in a boarding-house parlor, in company with a solitary little book entitled Scheyichbi and the Strand, or Early Days along the Delaware. Its name proved to be the only really attractive thing about it, and I was speculating drearily as to whether Charles Lamb himself could have extracted any amusement from its pages, when suddenly my eye lighted on a sentence that read like an old familiar friend: "The cru-

elty, the brutality, the mad, exterminating barbarity of Claverhouse, and Lauderdale, and Jeffreys, the minions of episcopacy and the king." There it stood, venerably correct in sentiment, with a strangely new location and surroundings. It is hard enough, surely, to see Claverhouse pilloried side by side with the brute Jeffreys; but to meet him on the banks of the Delaware is like encountering Ezzelin Romano on Fifth Avenue, or Julian the Apostate upon Boston Common.

Much of this universal harmony of abuse may be fairly charged to Macaulay, for it is he who in a few strongly written passages has presented to the general reader that remarkable compendium of wickedness commonly known as Dundee. "Rapacious and profane, of violent temper and obdurate heart," is the great historian's description of a man who sought but modest wealth, who never swore, and whose imperturbable gentleness of manner was more appalling in its way than the fiercest transports of rage. Under Macaulay's hands Claverhouse exhibits a degree of ubiquity and mutability that might well require some supernatural basis to sustain it. He supports as

many characters as Saladin in the Talisman; appearing now as his brother David Graham, in order to witness the trial of the Wigtown martyrs, and now as his distant kinsman, Patrick Graham, when it becomes expedient to figure as a dramatic feature of Argyle's execution. He changes at will into Sir Robert Grierson, and is thus made responsible for that highly curious game which Wodrow and Howie impute to Lag's troopers, and which Macaulay describes with as much gravity as if it were the sacking and pillage of some doomed Roman town. It is hard to understand the precise degree of pleasure embodied in calling one's self Apollyon and one's neighbor Beelzebub; it is harder still to be properly impressed with the tremendous significance of the deed. I have known a bevy of schoolgirls, who, after an exhaustive course of Paradise Lost, were so deeply imbued with the sombre glories of the satanic court that they assumed the names of its inhabitants; and, for the remainder of that term, even the mysterious little notes that form so important an element of boarding-school life began — heedless of grammar — with "Chère Moloch," and

ended effusively with "Your ever-devoted Belial." It is quite possible that these children thought and hoped they were doing something desperately wicked, only they lacked a historian to chronicle their guilt. It is equally certain that Lag's drunken troopers, if they ever did divert themselves in the unbecoming manner ascribed to them, might have been more profitably, and, it would seem, more agreeably, employed. But, of one thing, at least, we may feel tolerably confident. The pastime would have found scant favor in the eyes of Claverhouse, who was a man of little imagination, of stern discipline, and of fastidiously decorous habits. Why, even Wandering Willie does him this much justice, when he describes him as alone amid the lost souls, isolated in his contemptuous pride from their feasts and dreadful merriment: "And there sat Claverhouse, as beautiful as when he lived, with his long, dark, curled locks streaming down over his laced buff-coat, and his left hand always on his right spule-blade, to hide the wound that the silver bullet had made. He sat apart from them all, and looked at them with a melancholy, haughty countenance." If history

be, as Napoleon asserts, nothing but fiction agreed upon, let us go straight to the fountain-head, and enjoy our draught of romance unspoiled by any dubious taint of veracity.

Mr. Walter Bagehot, that most keen and tolerant of critics, has pointed out to us with his customary acumen that Macaulay never appreciated in the highest degree either of the two great parties — the Puritans and the Cavaliers — who through so many stirring events embodied all the life and color of English history. In regard to the former, it may be safely said that whatever slights they have received at the hands of other historians have been amply atoned for by Carlyle. He has thrown the whole weight of his powerful personality into their scale, and has fairly frightened us into that earnestness of mind which is requisite for a due appreciation of their merits. His fine scorn for the pleasant vices which ensnare humanity extended itself occasionally to things which are pleasant without being vicious; and under his leadership we hardly venture to hint at a certain sneaking preference for the gayer side of life. When Hazlitt, with a shameless audacity rare among English-

men, disencumbers himself lightly of his conscience, and apostrophizes the reign of Charles II. as that "happy, thoughtless age, when king and nobles led purely ornamental lives," we feel our flesh chilled at such a candid avowal of volatility. Surely Hazlitt must have understood that it is precisely the fatal picturesqueness of that period to which we, as moralists, so strenuously object. The courts of the first two Hanoverians were but little better or purer, but they were at least uglier, and we can afford to look with some leniency upon their short-comings. His sacred majesty George II. was hardly, save in the charitable eyes of Bishop Porteus, a shining example of rectitude; but let us rejoice that it never lay in the power of any human being to hint that he was in the smallest degree ornamental.

The Puritan, then, has been wafted into universal esteem by the breath of his great eulogist; but the Cavalier still waits for his historian. Poets and painters and romancers have indeed loved to linger over this warm, impetuous life, so rich in vigor and beauty, so full to the brim of a hardy adventurous joy. Here, they seem to say, far more than in

ancient Greece, may be realized the throbbing intensity of an unreflecting happiness. For the Greek drank deeply of the cup of knowledge, and its bitterness turned his laughter into tears; the Cavalier looked straight into the sunlight with clear, joyous eyes, and troubled himself not at all with the disheartening problems of humanity. How could a mind like Macaulay's, logical, disciplined, and gravely intolerant, sympathize for a moment with this utterly irresponsible buoyancy! How was he, of all men, to understand this careless zest for the old feast of life, this unreasoning loyalty to an indifferent sovereign, this passionate devotion to a church and easy disregard of her precepts, this magnificent wanton courage, this gay prodigality of enjoyment! It was his loss, no less than ours, that, in turning over the pages of the past, he should miss half of their beauty and their pathos; for History, that calumniated muse, whose sworn votaries do her little honor, has illuminated every inch of her parchment with a strong, generous hand, and does not mean that we should contemptuously ignore the smallest fragment of her work. The superb charge of

Rupert's cavalry; that impetuous rush to battle, before which no mortal ranks might stand unbroken; the little group of heart-sick Cavaliers who turned at sunset from the lost field of Marston Moor, and beheld their queen's white standard floating over the enemy's ranks; the scaffolds of Montrose and King Charles; the more glorious death of Claverhouse, pressing the blood-stained grass, and listening for the last time to the far-off cries of victory; Sidney Godolphin flinging away his life, with all its abundant promise and whispered hopes of fame; beautiful Francis Villiers lying stabbed to the heart in Surbiton lane, with his fair boyish face turned to the reddening sky, — these and many other pictures History has painted for us on her scroll, bidding us forget for a moment our formidable theories and strenuous partisanship, and suffer our hearts to be simply and wholesomely stirred by the brave lives and braver deaths of our mistaken brother men.

"Every matter," observes Epictetus, "has two handles by which it may be grasped;" and the Cavalier is no exception to the rule. We may, if we choose, regard him from a purely-

moral point of view, as a lamentably dissolute and profligate courtier; or from a purely picturesque point of view, as a gallant and loyal soldier; or we may, if we are wise, take him as he stands, making room for him cheerfully as a fellow-creature, and not vexing our souls too deeply over his brilliant divergence from our present standard. It is like a breath of fresh air blown from a roughening sea to feel, even at this distance of time, that strong young life beating joyously and eagerly against the barriers of the past; to see those curled and scented aristocrats who, like the "dandies of the Crimea," could fight as well as dance, facing pleasure and death, the ball-room and the battle-field, with the same smiling front, the same unflagging enthusiasm. No wonder that Mr. Bagehot, analyzing with friendly sympathy the strength and weakness of the Cavalier, should find himself somewhat out of temper with an historian's insensibility to virtues so primitive and recognizable in a not too merry world.

"The greatness of this character is not in Macaulay's way, and its faults are. Its license affronts him, its riot alienates him. He is for-

ever contrasting the dissoluteness of Prince Rupert's horse with the restraint of Cromwell's pikemen. A deep, enjoying nature finds in him no sympathy. He has no tears for that warm life, no tenderness for that extinct mirth. The ignorance of the Cavaliers, too, moves his wrath: 'They were ignorant of what every schoolgirl knows.' Their loyalty to their sovereign is the devotion of the Egyptians to the god Apis: 'They selected a calf to adore.' Their non-resistance offends the philosopher; their license is commented on in the tone of a precisian. Their indecorum does not suit the dignity of the narrator. Their rich, free nature is unappreciated; the tingling intensity of their joy is unnoticed. In a word, there is something of the schoolboy about the Cavalier; there is somewhat of a schoolmaster about the historian." [1]

That the gay gentlemen who glittered in the courts of the Stuarts were enviably ignorant of much that, for some inscrutable reason, we feel ourselves obliged to know to-day may be safely granted, and scored at once to the account of their good fortune. It is probable

1 *Literary Studies*, vol. ii.

that they had only the vaguest notions about Sesostris, and could not have defined an hypothesis of homophones with any reasonable degree of accuracy. But they were possessed, nevertheless, of a certain information of their own, not garnered from books, and not always attainable to their critics. They knew life in its varying phases, from the delicious trifling of a polished and witty society to the stern realities of the camp and battle-field. They knew the world, women, and song, three things as pleasant and as profitable in their way as Hebrew, Euclid, and political economy. They knew how to live gracefully, to fight stoutly, and to die honorably; and how to extract from the gray routine of existence a wonderfully distinct flavor of novelty and enjoyment. There were among them, as among the Puritans, true lovers, faithful husbands, and tender fathers; and the indiscriminate charge of dissoluteness on the one side, like the indiscriminate charge of hypocrisy on the other, is a cheap expression of our individual intolerance.

The history of the Cavalier closes with Killiecrankie. The waning prestige of a once powerful influence concentrated itself in Cla-

verhouse, the latest and strongest figure on its canvas, the accepted type of its most brilliant and defiant qualities. Readers of old-fashioned novels may remember a lachrymose story, in two closely printed volumes, which enjoyed an amazing popularity some twenty years ago, and which was called The Last of the Cavaliers. It had for its hero a perfectly impossible combination of virtues, a cross between the Chevalier Bayard and the Admirable Crichton, labeled Dundee, and warranted proof against all the faults and foibles of humanity. This automaton, who moved in a rarefied atmosphere through the whole dreary tale, performing noble deeds and uttering virtuous sentiments with monotonous persistency, embodied, we may presume, the author's conception of a character not generally credited with such superfluous excellence. It was a fine specimen of imaginative treatment, and not wholly unlike some very popular historic methods by which similar results are reached to-day. Quite recently, a despairing English critic, with an ungratified taste for realities, complained somewhat savagely that "a more intolerable embodiment of unrelieved excel-

lence and monotonous success than the hero of the pious Gladstonian's worship was never moulded out of plaster of Paris." He was willing enough to yield his full share of admiration, but he wanted to see the real, human, interesting Gladstone back of all this conventional and disheartening mock-heroism; and, in the same spirit, we would like sometimes to see the real Claverhouse back of all the dramatic accessories in which he has been so liberally disguised.

But where, save perhaps in the ever-delightful pages of Old Mortality, shall we derive any moderate gratification from our search? Friends are apt to be as ill advised as foes, and Dundee's eulogists, from Napier to Aytoun, have been distinguished rather for the excellence of their intentions than for any great felicity of execution. The "lion-hearted warrior," for whom Aytoun flings wide the gates of Athol, might be Cœur-de-Lion himself, or Marshal Ney, or Stonewall Jackson, or any other brave fighter. There is no distinctive flavor of the Graeme in the somewhat long-winded hero, with his "falcon eye," and his "war-horse black as night," and his trite

commonplaces about foreign gold and Highland honor. On the other hand, the verdict of the disaffected may be summed up in the extraordinary lines with which Macaulay closes his account of Killiecrankie, and of Dundee's brief, glorious struggle for his king: "During the last three months of his life he had proved himself a great warrior and politician, and his name is therefore mentioned with respect by that large class of persons who think that there is no excess of wickedness for which courage and ability do not atone." No excess of wickedness! One wonders what more could be said if we were discussing Tiberius or Caligula, or if colder words were ever used to chill a soldier's fame. Mr. Mowbray Morris, the latest historian in the field, seems divided between a natural desire to sift the evidence for all this wickedness and a polite disinclination to say anything rude during the process, "a common impertinence of the day," in which he declares he has no wish to join. This is exceedingly pleasant and courteous, though hardly of primary importance; for a biographer's sole duty is, after all, to the subject of his biography, and not

to Macaulay, who can hold his own easily enough without any assistance whatever. When Sir James Stephens published, some years ago, his very earnest and accurate vindication of Sir Elijah Impey from the charges so lavishly brought against him in that matchless essay on Warren Hastings, he expressed at the same time his serene conviction that the great world would go on reading the essay and believing the charges just the same, — a new rendering of "Magna est veritas et prævalebit," which brings it very near to Hesiod's primitive experience.

As for Mr. Morris's book, it is a carefully dispassionate study of a wild and stormy time, with a gray shadow of Claverhouse flitting faintly through it. In his wholesome dislike for the easy confidence with which historians assume to know everything, its author has touched the opposite extreme, and manifests such conscientious indecision as to the correctness of every document he quotes, that our heads fairly swim with accumulated uncertainties. This method of narration has one distinct advantage, — it cannot lead us far into error; but neither can it carry us for-

ward impetuously with the mighty rush of great events, and make us feel in our hearts the real and vital qualities of history. Mr. Morris proves very clearly and succinctly that Claverhouse has been, to use his temperate expression, "harshly judged," and that much of the cruelty assigned to him may be easily and cheaply refuted. He does full justice to the scrupulous decorum of his hero's private life, and to the wonderful skill with which, after James's flight, he roused and held together the turbulent Highland clans, impressing even these rugged spirits with the charm and force of his vigorous personality. In the field Claverhouse lived like the meanest of his men; sharing their poor food and hard lodgings, marching by their side through the bitter winter weather, and astonishing these hardy mountaineers by a power of physical endurance fully equal to their own. The memory of his brilliant courage, of his gracious tact, even of his rare personal beauty, dwelt with them for generations, and found passionate expression in that cry wrung from the sore heart of the old chieftain at Culloden, "Oh, for one hour of Dundee!"

But in the earlier portions of Mr. Morris's narrative, in the scenes at Drumclog and Bothwell Bridge, at Ayrshire and Clydesdale, we confess that we look in vain for the Claverhouse of our fancy. Can it be that this energetic, modest, and rather estimable young soldier, distinguished, apparently, for nothing save prompt and accurate obedience to his orders, is the man who, in a few short years, made himself so feared and hated that it became necessary to credit him with the direct patronage of Satan? One is tempted to quote Mr. Swinburne's pregnant lines concerning another enigmatic character of Scottish history: —

> "Some faults the gods will give to fetter
> Man's highest intent,
> But surely you were something better
> Than innocent."

Of the real Dundee we catch only flying glimpses here and there, — on his wedding night, for instance, when he is off and away after the now daring rebels, leaving his bride of an hour to weep his absence, and listen with what patience she might to her mother's assiduous reproaches. "I shall be revenged some

time or other of the unseasonable trouble these dogs give me," grumbles the young husband with pardonable irritation. "They might have let Tuesday pass." It is the real Dundee, likewise, who, in the gray of early morning, rides briskly out of Edinburgh in scant time to save his neck, scrambles up the castle rock for a last farewell to Gordon, and is off to the north to raise the standard of King James, "wherever the spirit of Montrose shall direct me." In vain Hamilton and the convention send word imperatively, "Dilly, dilly, dilly, come and be killed." The wily bird declines the invitation, and has been censured with some asperity for his unpatriotic reluctance to comply. For one short week of rest he lingers at Dudhope, where his wife is awaiting her confinement, and then flies further northward to Glen Ogilvy, whither a regiment is quickly sent to apprehend him. There is a reward of twenty thousand pounds sterling on his head, but he who thinks to win it must move, like Hödr, with his feet shod in silence. By the time Livingstone and his dragoons reach Glamis, Dundee is far in the Highlands, and henceforth all the fast-darkening hopes of

the loyalists are centred in him alone. For him remain thirteen months of incredible hardships and anxiety, a single stolen visit to his wife and infant son, heart-sick appeals to James for some recognition of the desperate efforts made in his behalf, a brilliant irregular campaign, a last decisive victory, and a soldier's death. "It is the less matter for me, seeing the day goes well for my master," he answers simply, when told of his mortal hurt; and in this unfaltering loyalty we read the life-long lesson of the Cavalier. If, as a recent poet tells us, the memory of Nero be not wholly vile, because one human being was found to weep for him, surely the memory of James Stuart may be forgiven much because of this faithful service. It is hard to understand it now.

> "In God's name, then, what plague befell us,
> To fight for such a thing?"

is our modern way of looking at the problem; but the mental processes of the Cavalier were less inquisitorial and analytic. "I am no politician, and I do not care about nice distinctions," says Major Bellenden bluntly, when requested to consider the insurgents' side of

the case. "My sword is the king's, and when he commands, I draw it in his service."

As for that other and better known Claverhouse, the determined foe of the Covenant, the unrelenting and merciless punisher of a disobedient peasantry, he, too, is best taken as he stands; shorn, indeed, of Wodrow's extravagant embellishments, but equally free from the delicate gloss of a too liberal absolution. He was a soldier acting under the stringent orders of an angry government, and he carried out the harsh measures entrusted to him with a stern and impartial severity. Those were turbulent times, and the wild western Whigs had given decisive proof on more than one occasion that they were ill disposed to figure as mere passive martyrs to their cause.

> "For treason, d' ye see,
> Was to them a dish of tea,
> And murder, bread and butter."

They were stout fighters, too, taking as kindly to their carnal as to their spiritual weapons, and a warfare against them was as ingloriously dangerous as the melancholy skirmishes of our own army with the Indians, who, it would seem, were driven to the war-path by a some-

what similar mode of treatment. There is not the slightest evidence, however, that Claverhouse was averse either to the danger or the cruelty of the work he was given to do. Religious toleration was then an unknown quantity. The Church of England and her Presbyterian neighbor persecuted each other with friendly assiduity, while Rome was more than willing, should an opportunity offer, to lay a chastening hand on both. If there were any new-fangled notions in the air about private judgment and the rights of conscience, Claverhouse was the last man in England to have been a pioneer in such a movement. He was passionately attached to his church, unreservedly loyal to his king, and as indifferent as Hamlet to his own life and the lives of other people. It is strange to hear Mr. Morris excuse him for his share in the death of the lad Hyslop, by urging in his behalf a Pilate-like disinclination to quarrel with a powerful ally, and risk a censure from court. Never was there a man who brooked opposition as impatiently, when he felt that his interests or his principles were at stake; but it is to be feared that the shooting of a Covenanter more or less

was hardly, in his eyes, a matter of vital importance. This attitude of unconcern is amply illustrated in the letter written by Claverhouse to Queensberry after the execution of John Brown, "the Christian carrier," for the sole crime of absenting himself from the public worship of the Episcopalians, says Macaulay; for outlawry and resetting of rebels, hint less impassioned historians. Be this as it may, however, John Brown was shot in the Ploughlands; and his nephew, seeing the soldiers' muskets leveled next at him, consented, on the promise of being recommended for mercy, to make "an ingenuous confession," and give evidence against his uncle's associates. Accordingly, we find Claverhouse detailing these facts to Queensberry, and adding in the most purely neutral spirit, —

"I have acquitted myself when I have told your Grace the case. He [the nephew] has been but a month or two with his halbert; and if your Grace thinks he deserves no mercy, justice will pass on him; for I, having no commission of justiciary myself, have delivered him up to the lieutenant-general, to be disposed of as he pleases."

Here, at least, is a sufficiently candid exposition of Claverhouse's habitual temper. He was, in no sense of the word, bloodthirsty. The test oath was not of his contriving; the penalty for its refusal was not of his appointing. He was willing enough to give his prisoner the promised chance for life; but as for any real solicitude in the matter, you might as well expect Hamlet to be solicitous because, by an awkward misapprehension, a foolish and innocent old man has been stabbed like a rat behind the arras.

When Plutarch was asked why he did not oftener select virtuous characters to write about, he intimated that he found the sinners more interesting; and while his judgment is to be deprecated, it can hardly be belied. We revere Marcus Aurelius, but we delight in Cæsar; we admire Sir Robert Peel, but we enjoy Richelieu; we praise Wellington, but we never weary of Napoleon. "Our being," says Montaigne, "is cemented with sickly qualities; and whoever should divest man of the seeds of those qualities would destroy the fundamental conditions of human life." It is idle to look to Claverhouse for precisely the

virtues which we most esteem in John Howard; but we need not, on that account, turn our eyes reproachfully from one of the most striking and characteristic figures in English history. He was not merely a picturesque feature of his cause, like Rupert of the Rhine, nor a martyr to its fallen hopes, like the Marquis of Montrose; he was its single chance, and, with his death, it died. In versatility and daring, in diplomatic shrewdness and military acumen, he far outranked any soldier of his day. "The charm of an engaging personality," says a recent critic, "belongs to Montrose, and the pity of his death deepens the romance of his life; but the strong man was Dundee."